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PICTURESQUE OLD HOUSES

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BATEMANS.

PICTURESQUE OLD HOUSES

BEING THE IMPRESSIONS OF A WANDERER OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

By **ALLAN FEA**, Author of "*Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places*," "*The Flight of the King*," "*King Monmouth*," *etc., etc.*

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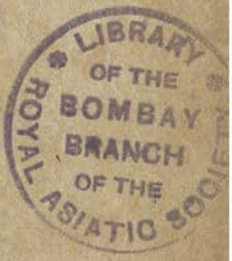

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

N-C-30

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DEDICATED

BY THE GRACIOUS PERMISSION

OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS TO

PRINCESS LOUISE

DUCHESS OF ARGYLL

PREFACE

IN the hope that these impressions I am here putting together may prove of some little amusement to those who, like myself, find a delight in wandering off the beaten track and exploring nooks and corners of our old country, I may explain at the outset that I do not intend to confine myself to any particular method in the selection of the various localities I have attempted to describe. Those who seek for guide-book accuracy or real topographical knowledge must not refer to these pages; the title will foreshadow that this is merely a record of sundry impressions collected (mainly for my own amusement) from casual notes and sketches made at various times. I trust that those who dip into these pages will not put me down as an egotist, for, I regret to say, the letter "I" figures far too frequently to please me. Had it been possible to

carry out my idea in any other way, I certainly should have preferred it; but this was impracticable. Therefore, I hope the reader who finds the personal part of the impressions intrusive, will skip when the letter "I" is too much to the fore.

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Picturesque Old Houses

CHAPTER I

NOWADAYS everybody, more or less, is a bit of an antiquary, so long as he or she does not get bored to death with dates and dry-as-dust genealogies. Even the bean-feaster (or fiend-beaster, as I believe he is termed if specially noisy) has a lingering affection for ruins or historic trees—that is to say, if they are made palatable by the proximity of an inn, whether ancient or modern. Certainly there is an innate love of the past in our composition, although perhaps we all do not care to acknowledge it. When an old landmark disappears, who does not feel a pang of regret at parting with something which linked us with the past? Seldom an old house is threatened with demolition but there is some protest, more perhaps from the old associations than from any particular architectural merit the building may have. A

great writer has likened an old house to a human heart, with a life of its own, full of sad and sweet reminiscences. Truly these reminiscences may be buried in obscurity, but even if they are, it is a pleasure to speculate upon the past associations, grave and gay.

Without further introduction, let us set out in search of picturesque old houses. We will take our first ramble in a county for which most of us have a warm corner in our hearts—viz., the Garden of England. Whether or not the fond remembrance may be associated with a happy holiday at Margate, or like Mr. Tuggs we may have lost our heart at Ramsgate, or perchance a Whitstable Native may have touched a tender chord—anyway, take them all round, few counties are so generally popular as Kent. So accessible from town, one would naturally suppose every nook and corner was familiar ground and had been done to death by the tourist ; but it is not so, by any means. To find a genuine bit of old England, one cannot do better than explore certain portions of north-east Kent.

Comparatively few of the countless thousands who yearly flock to the popular seaside resorts on the coast of this county have broken the journey at the

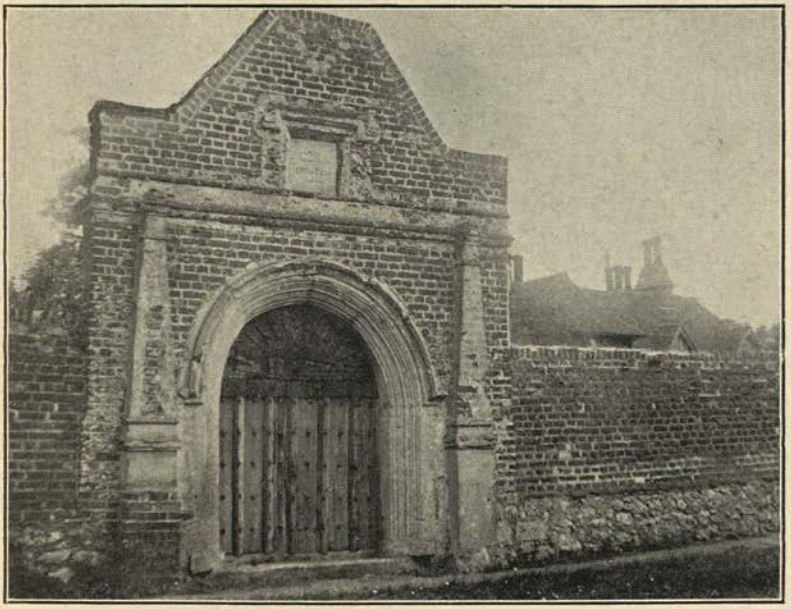
quaint old town of Faversham. I propose to alight here and wend my way in the direction of Hollingbourne, where at present no railway supervenes to destroy the impression of a thoroughly old-world country.

The irregular outline of the overhanging gables of the main street and market square of Faversham gives one a typical picture of an ancient town. Many of the houses are, indeed, much older than a first glance would lead one to suppose. Not a few of them are re-cased Gothic buildings. In a rather squalid part of the town there is an old shop front, with a low roof supported by an open arcade of massive oak pillars, grimy and generally dilapidated, still a very good example of a shop of the Middle Ages. One broad street, paved with cobbles, leading nowhere in particular, except towards the river, has many interesting "bits" to delight the artist, and I could state an instance where one of the fraternity became so enamoured of some old Dutch-looking roofs by the waterside that he totally forgot the fact that he had left his wife in another remote part of the town, seeking for him in vain for upwards of an hour. I shall presently give an instance of a similar separation, by which a happy pair were

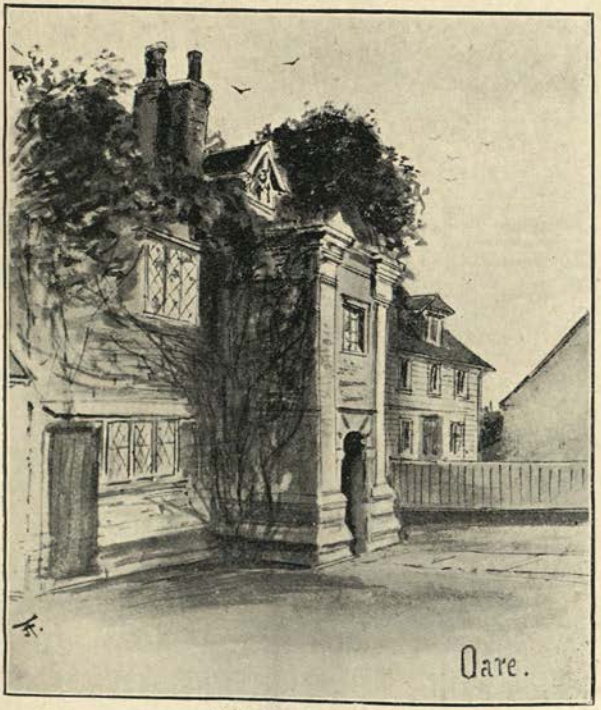
brought to the most desperate straits, for the drama happened at Lenham upon the occasion of my visit.

Faversham Church has been much spoiled by restorations, but there are some interesting brasses, monuments, mural paintings, and two very early Gothic chests.

About a mile outside the town of Faversham stands the much-restored Davington Priory, a famous old building, once ruinous, but now ruined by having had too much money expended upon it. The remains of the old Court House, to my mind, are far more interesting—or, rather, I should say the remains of the outbuildings of Davington Court, for the house itself was demolished in the days of Charles II. In the old wall of the kitchen garden is a very imposing Jacobean entrance, with the original folding oak-panelled gates, having the motto above, "*Deus nobis hæc otia fecit*," and the date 1624. A long, narrow enclosure at the base of a steep sloping bank is by tradition said to have been the tilting-ground in the good old days of chivalry. It still goes by the name of "The Knights' Field." During the repairs to the Priory about fifty years ago, a curious helmet was discovered built into the wall, which, judging from the date of the



GATEWAY, DAVINGTON COURT.



OLD HOUSE, OARE.

masonry, must have been placed there in Queen Elizabeth's time.

To the north of Davington is the little village of Oare, near the mouth of the river Swale, where are some quaint old houses worth notice. At a creek, called the "Stool" in old records, the last of the crowned Stuarts was brought ashore after his capture by the Kentish fishermen.[1] I merely mention this to keep alive the spot as a historical landmark. In hunting up some of these places thus associated some time ago, I found local tradition had with time expanded certain facts. The ferryman at Elmley insisted that King James landed at that spot "with all his fleet"! Argument was useless. I departed worsted.

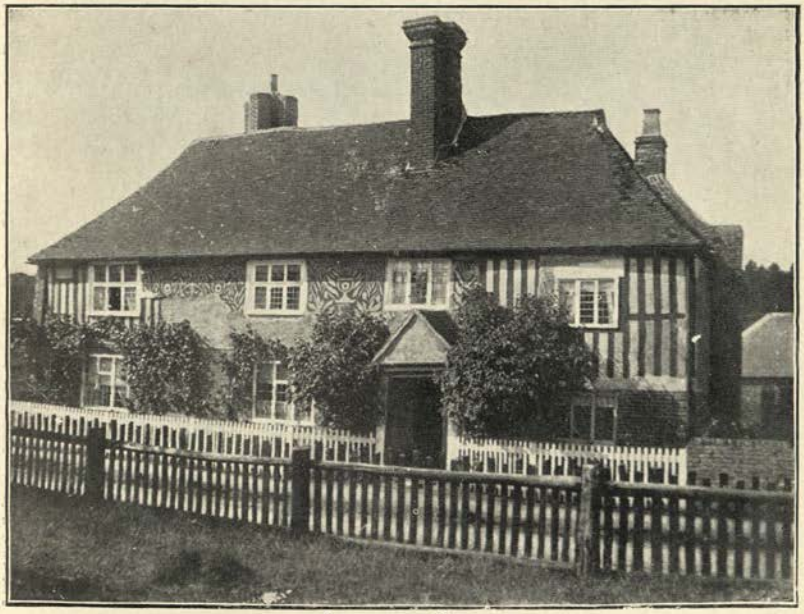
But I have diverged somewhat out of my proposed course. The road to Hollingbourne runs in a south-westerly direction, branching out of the old London and Canterbury highway at historical Ospringe. The general appearance of this place, immortalised by Froissart and other chroniclers, leaves an impression of ugliness and squalor. But there are some picturesque houses for all that; a corner house, in particular, by the now dry "waterway" (a half-timber house,

[1] *Vide Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places.*

having inside an elaborate moulded ceiling). A little beyond Ospringe, walking westwards, we turn to the left, following the boundary of the pretty grounds which surround the residence of the Rural Dean of Faversham. We now enter a somewhat desolate and monotonous country, for the most part void of hedges, with occasional woods, hop-gardens, gravel-pits, and turnip-fields.

At a distance of about three and a half miles from our starting-point we find a signpost bearing the cheerful intelligence, "To Faversham Workhouse." The weary traveller making his way to the north-east must be considerably comforted by this promise of a haven of rest, and pilgrims to Canterbury who come from the Weald of Kent ought to inwardly offer up thanks to the local authorities, whoever they may be, for resuscitating their flagging spirits.

Onwards for another mile and a half, past an incongruous collection of traction-engines and trucks, we enter the village of Newnham, with its church of cold grey flint and a Swiss-looking spire, a row of uninteresting tenements, the village smithy, a sleepy-looking inn, and last, but not least, an old house which goes by the name of "The Calico." The name probably originated from a sign which



"THE CALICO."

"THE CALICO."

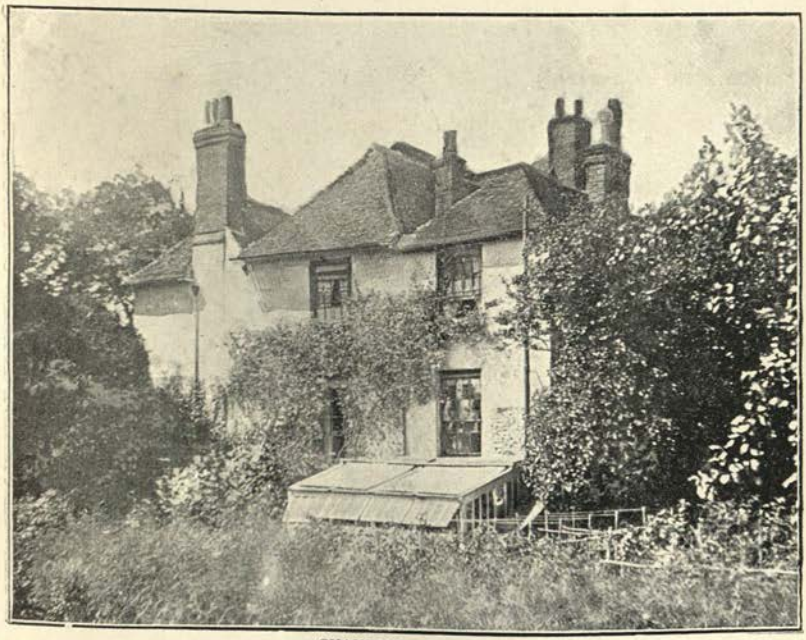
it may have borne at the time when calico printing was first introduced into this country, in the early part of the eighteenth century; or perhaps it may have been derived from the ornamental design worked upon the pargetting with which a portion of the house was cased in the year 1710, if we may judge by the date upon it. The pattern is certainly suggestive of printed calico, and is both pleasing in colour and line—indeed, an architect of the present day might do worse than reproduce the design in facsimile upon the façade of some of our modern houses.

I have seen other cottages with somewhat similar decoration, but in black and white—never in this pleasing warm red-brick colour. Where the plaster work has crumbled away may be seen the oak beams of the original structure. The combination of wood and plaster, with the cosy casement windows and a massy porch projecting into the street, shading a mighty nail-studded oak door, presents altogether a most charming result. At the back of the house we find a delightful grouping of gables and chimneys, the timber beams between the plaster here being painted black, like some of the old Cheshire houses. Fine panelled rooms may be seen within; ceilings with black oak rafters and elaborate stone Jacobean

fireplaces, carved upon which are heads encircled by those uncomfortable ruffs still in vogue in James I.'s time; griffins, the fleur-de-lis, and all kinds of strange embellishments. One of the fireplaces has a good fireback bearing the Commonwealth date of 1650, surmounted by a regal crown—a curious combination which looks as if the occupant of those days had the strength of his own convictions, and was not afraid to acknowledge his Royalist sympathies. Not many years since an interesting discovery was made in the attics: a helmet and double-handed broadsword were brought to light. These, I understand, have been removed to Sharsted Court, the seat of the Delaunes. It is not unlikely other things are yet to be discovered in this curious old building, for there are many stories of smuggled goods having been brought here a couple of generations ago. Little is known of "The Calico" beyond the fact that a family of some importance named Hulse lived there some three centuries ago. They have long since migrated to other counties, and the name would be forgotten were it not for a mural tablet in the church of Newnham.

There is but little to interest us in the church. It has slight pretensions to Norman and Early

INTERIOR OF "THE CALICO."



CHAMPION COURT.

Decorated architecture and a good "king-post," but that is about all. Upon the higher ground above the village is Champion Court, the old home of the De Champions, and Sharsted Court. Both are worth inspection—the former for its fourteenth-century piscina in "the chapel"—or cellar—and the latter for its pleasing medley of gables, chimneys, and dormer windows, and a quaint garden with formal clipped yew hedges. One who has been there in the early summer would never forget the scent of the roses clustering over the garden walls, and that of the lime-trees beyond, or the solemnity of the great beech avenue known as "Sharsted Walk."

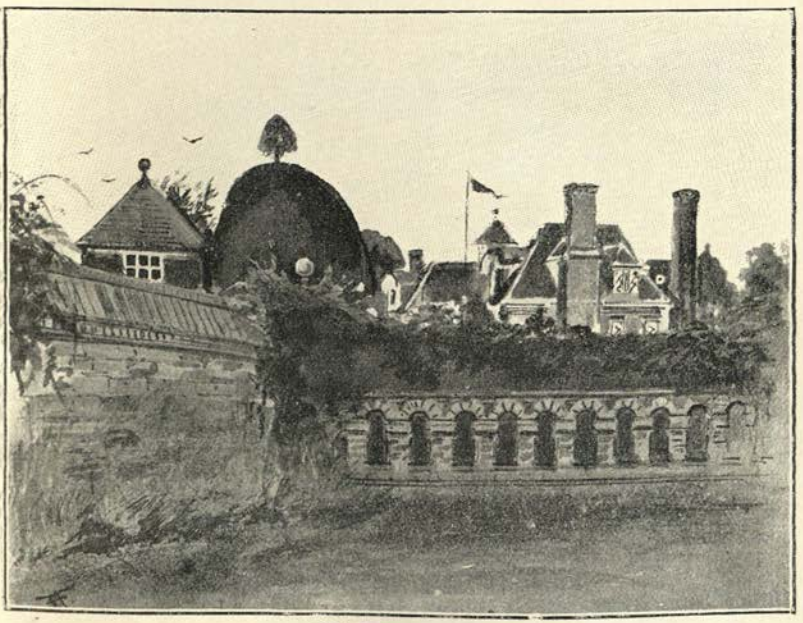
Keeping upon the high ground, we have cherry orchards on all sides. Tourists going through this part of Kent in the cherry-picking season will find the villages absolutely uninhabited. Children, mothers, fathers, grandparents, are all, so to speak, "up a tree." If you want the pew opener or the village clerk to open a church door for you, you must seek for that personage in a cherry-tree—at least, that is my experience. This depopulation of villages is not remarkable, however, when we consider the amount of labour required to pick a good crop. On the Sharsted estate alone it is by no means out of the

way to send up to London twenty tons of cherries in a week, and this continues on the average for about six weeks.

Those light sleepers who have the misfortune to pass their nights in a village of north-east Kent at this season of the year—that is to say, to retire and to rise at the ordinary and sensible hours of town residents—will not readily forget their experiences. At the first dawn of day there are gun reports on all sides, as if the whole country was in a state of siege. But this is not the only noise, for it is supplemented with a kind of tin-tray arrangement by which those of too tender an age to use firearms, may earn both their living and the everlasting hatred of those who are not inflicted (blessed, perhaps, in this instance) with stone deafness. Would that the enterprising American who invented that wonderfully effectual scarecrow might find his way into Kent! In explaining the result of his first experiment, it will be remembered, the Yankee's remark was: "Was it a success? Why, yaas, I rather guess it was. One old crow was so scared that he brought back a grain of corn he had stolen three days before!"

There are other memories, however, of the cherry orchards—viz., the result of having permission to eat

OLD HOUSE, EASTLING.



SHARSTED COURT.

of the luscious and indigestible fruit *ad lib.* I will not draw a comparison between the experiences of a bad sailor on a sea voyage, for one grows out of that as time goes on; whereas if one perseveres in the cherry orchards, he will never overcome the ill-effects—that is to say, if he survives. The cherry-pickers, as a rule, may consume as much fruit as they like at the outset, for the very good reason that they gain their experience, and abstain for ever after. But enough of cherry orchards. Enough is said to be as good as a feast, and a feast of cherries, as I have explained, is scarcely good enough to be ventured upon a second time.

Ere we continue our journey towards Hollingbourne, we must explore a little to the various points of the compass, for we are in a centre teeming with the most charming old houses and churches. At Eastling, for instance, which lies about a mile to the south of Newnham, is one of the quaintest old farmhouses imaginable. The porch, with its characteristic Charles the First windows, is entirely different from "The Calico," but is equally interesting, and the side of the building faced with red Sussex tiling would tempt the most exacting artist to halt and make a sketch—indeed, I would

recommend him to hurry there ere the restorer sets to work and destroys it.

We might yet go farther afield in this direction to see other fine old timber houses at Throwley and Leaveland, or to Badlesmere, away from everywhere, and where, as a sort of practical joke, sightseers at Faversham are sent to do penance.

Seed Farm, near Eastling, and more in our direct way, is another quaint old house, all out of the perpendicular and horizontal, leaning in such a way that it would be no easy matter to speculate upon the direction in which it would fall if its basement gave way. Doddington village, the farthest point from the railway, north and south, probably will soon be brought in touch with the world by a light railway, but to-day it is scarcely kept alive by the intermittent visits of a local carrier crawling between Faversham and Maidstone. The "Chequers Inn" recalls one of Prout's drawings—recalls also, I believe, certain smuggling memories.

To the north is the pretty little village of Kingsdown, endeared to me, I may add, by some of my earliest memories. The old Court Farm, long since pulled down, still remains an impression on my memory, though I can have been no more than three

OLD HOUSE, THROWLEY.

SEED FARM.

years old when I slept within its walls; but the place is more endeared to me from the fact that my father used to relate his juvenile recollections of happy days spent there—recollections of the generation which was then passing away—a fairly long link if one considers the date when those old people were born.

It is strange how some trivial landmarks assume an importance when they are associated with the doings of one's father when *he* was a boy! A farm where perhaps a child was hospitably entertained by Farmer Smith or Jones, leaves so great an impression that the tradition is handed down from father to son, insomuch that for ever after such a landmark is looked upon as a place of vast importance! Perhaps this is

merely the result of the reverence one used to have for one's parents. Some people say that the sentiment is as extinct as the dodo ; but I will not go so far as to accept that. But it is certain that "the gov'nor" or "the old man" of to-day has to take a back seat, and is not looked upon with the same reverence that used to be considered natural or proper.

To the north of Kingsdown is Linsted, the most antiquated village under the sun, or, as an old villager once said to me, "It be'ant only ancient, sir, but it's a bit of antiquity." The houses, the church, the people, all seem to belong to centuries ago (still, let it be said in bated breath, there is a School Board not very far away). But I must pause awhile to renew the plates of my camera, collect my views, and perhaps the reader will say—judging from the above digression—my thoughts also.

CHAPTER II

THE nearest and the prettiest way from Newnham to Linsted is through Sharsted Park. Just at the back of old Calico House there is a steep lane, with the hedges on either side meeting overhead, and forming a veritable cloister walk—a fairy glade in the daytime, a pitchy black tunnel at night.

Skirting the mansion and some colossal beech-trees, and taking a path beneath some sombre firs, we presently emerge upon a road by one of those snug and enviable little wooden lodges peculiar to this part of Kent. A field-path, reached by a stile on the opposite side of the road, dips down into a hollow, and again ascends in the direction of a little church tower, which peeps out among the trees on the brow of the hill. This is Linsted; and as we get nearer, the general impression is that of its antiquity. It looks like a village left behind in "the steady march of progress," and long since forgotten. The church is flanked on one side by an old inn,

and on the other by a remarkably picturesque Gothic house, which at one time was also a roadside hostelry.

It is astonishing the amount of timber the old architects and builders lavished upon the less important houses of the Middle Ages. Little wonder that these structures stand so well the wear and tear of time. Some fifty yards away is a tiny timber cottage, so small that it would be certainly easier for a reasonably sized man to enter by one of the first-story windows in preference to the doll's-house entrance porch, which leans over the road as if it were contemplating a dive upon some hapless pedestrian.

Over the porch of the inn and also of the door of a cottage near the village may be seen plaster medallions representing the profiles of Roman warriors. They were removed years ago from the ancient seat of the Lords Teynham. The church is in a sad state of repair. Here are still those old cumbersome high-backed Georgian pews—unsightly, it is true, but not uncomfortable, and certainly convenient during a dreary sermon. The tombs of the Teynham and Roper families are particularly fine. Upon one of them are bas-reliefs in alabaster of the sons and daughters of a worthy knight and his dame—a really fine work of art, and most interesting from the

OLD HOUSE, LINSTED.

OLD HOUSE, LINSTED.

grotesque costumes. The recumbent effigies of the stately parents are above, surmounted by a canopy worthy of their dignity. There is much to be seen in the church besides the monuments, not forgetting an elaborate brass candelabrum of Charles II.'s

Fancy Dress on a Monument.

time, and one of those early helmets with peaked vizors which the "Kernoozers'" Club are wont to rave about.

Northwards from Linsted, in the direction of Teynham (of which I shall speak presently), there is a group of old houses—one with a deep thatch

roof, all angles and corners; another, a typical Jacobean house, with the date 1643 over the entrance porch of "herring-bone" brickwork and oak beams. To make the picture complete, there is the great tithe barn close by, and a ball-surmounted entrance gate with the usual "upping-stock" or mounting-block accompaniment.

A few hundred yards farther (in the direction of Teynham) stands another most charming old farmstead, with some of those curved black beams which harmonise so well with the perpendicular and horizontal lines of a timber building. But the old houses hereabouts are too numerous to particularise without becoming tedious. Suffice it to say Ludgate Farm to the south, and a half-timber house a little to the north of the Sittingbourne road, should not pass unnoticed.

Returning to Doddington, we now continue our journey towards Hollingbourne through a densely wooded and sparsely inhabited country. Save here and there an isolated habitation, there are no signs of life beyond the continual warble of birds and the scamper of rabbits. To see this country at its best is to see it in the spring, when the ground is literally carpeted with violets and primroses. What

OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED.

OLD HOUSE NEAR LINSTED.

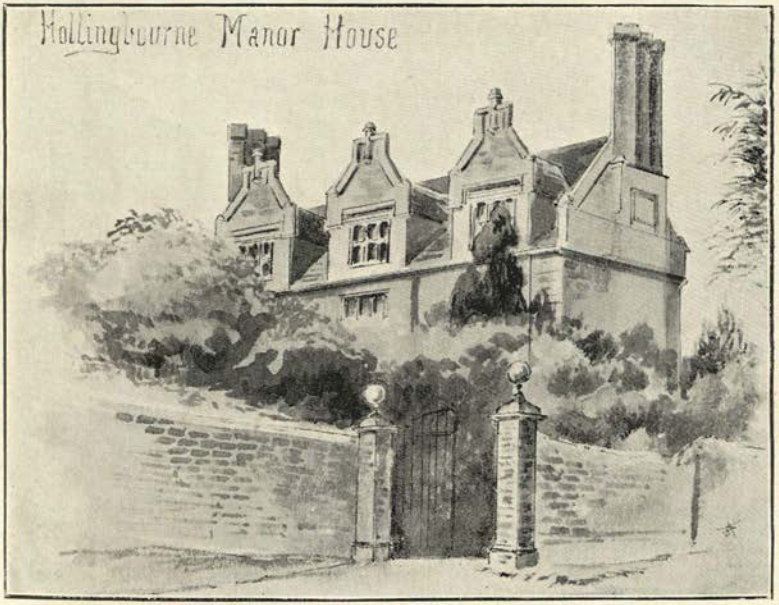
a feast for the youngsters from the slums of London to be brought here for a week or so at this season of the year! Later, however, except in the nutting and blackberry time, there are not so many attractions for children as other parts of the county could provide. Water, for instance, is conspicuous by its absence—that most essential of elements to complete the joys of a rural existence, from a juvenile point of view as well as that of an adult, whether sportsman or not.

I have seen youngsters sent down from London to this part of the country for a summer holiday, wandering about aimlessly along the dusty roads, instead of occupying their time, as one would imagine they would, in the woods and meadows. Perhaps the monotony of the country palls upon them, as it did upon that town-bred little girl who, returning to the great metropolis after such an uneventful holiday, and exhilarated by being a witness to a fight, a fire, and a cab accident, was heard to soliloquise, "Gimme London!" For the moment I forget who tells the story, but it is true, however morally sad it may be.

Wending our way upwards, we presently pass the ruinous lodge of Torry Hill (once the seat of

the dormant peerage of Kingsdown), which looks forlorn in its dishevelled environment of nettles and broken fencing. Here the road dips again, then rises steadily as it winds between the high hedgerows. At length we come into a wide cross-road, and, bearing to the left, approach the summit of Hollingbourne Hill, where a gorgeous panorama of the Weald of Kent opens out before us.

The first part of the descent into the village is precipitous, with hanging woods on either side. A notice-board warns cyclists of impending danger; still, there have been numerous accidents, owing, doubtless, to the fact that when the steep part of the descent is over, a rider thinks that the danger is past, whereas it really still looms in the distance in the form of a sudden twist in the road, with which a reckless rider running at a good pace would be unable to cope, the result being that he would run like a battering ram into the side wall of the village forge. I wonder whether it has ever occurred to the Cyclists' Touring Club that certain hills ought to have a *second* danger signal-post placed in positions such as the above, where the road has become comparatively level after a steep dip, showing that there are still "breakers ahead."



OLD HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE.

"Mine host" at the inn opposite the forge informed me that it is no very uncommon occurrence for him to carry in the—I won't say mangled remains—but inanimate body of some hapless wheelman. This, however, was before the more powerful brakes now in use had been universally adopted; so let us hope that similar catastrophes may in the future be few and far between.

The entrance into Hollingbourne is picturesque in the extreme. The forge I have just mentioned is an old building with a carved barge-board in its little dormer gable. The inn opposite is also of very respectable antiquity, and next to it is a fine old Tudor timber house, with a good corner-post and the original dull green glass in its window casements.

Farther down the hill, and the Manor House, with its ponderous deep-red stone-faced gables, comes in view, towering above the smaller tenements as if self-conscious of its own importance. It has been restored of recent years, and to a certain extent spoiled by the insertion of plate-glass windows. I remember it many years ago when it was practically untouched, and had a particularly ghostly air about its tapestried chambers.

Still descending, we come to another quaint group of old cottages. One of them has just undergone a process of cleaning, scraping, and varnishing, but altogether it has come out very well, and, weather-beaten for a few years, it may again prove a tempting morsel for the artist's brush. Doubtless the cottage to its left will follow suit, if not found too dilapidated. The old sign of the "Bell" still creaks on its rusty hinges to delude the thirsty traveller, for should he succeed after sundry knocks in obtaining admittance, he will discover that it has long since ceased to be an inn.

Close by is the church of All Saints (of the Perpendicular period in particular), containing some fine monuments of the Culpeppers, who built the Manor House, the lady representatives of which family worked the embroidered velvet coverlets of the pulpit and communion table in honour of the Restoration. One of the tombs has a beautifully sculptured effigy of a lady. Those who examine the graceful modelling of the hands will observe the old custom of having the wedding-ring attached to the wrist by a silken cord.

How delightful it is to saunter leisurely in an old village church, reading the queer inscriptions and

"BELL INN," HOLLINGBOURNE.

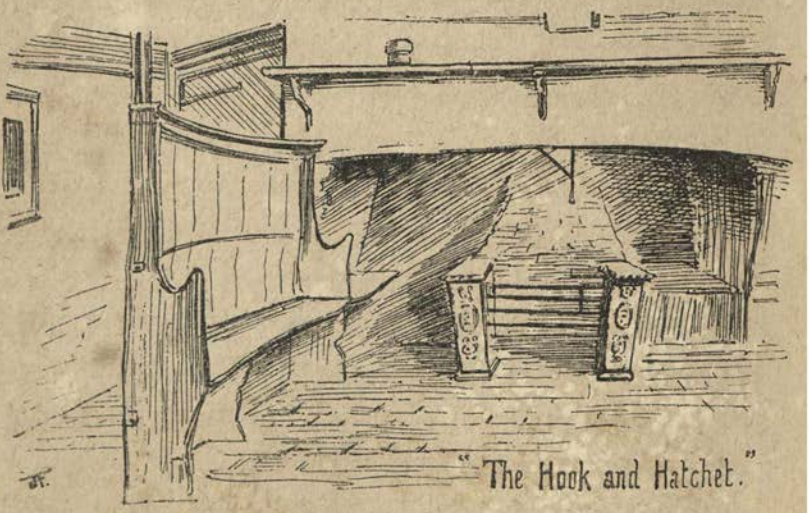
GODFREY HOUSE, HOLLINGBOURNE.

dreaming of the flesh and blood realities of those silent stone impersonations lying in state! But the enjoyment is greatly enhanced when the harmonies of the organ—a good organ, moreover, played by a good organist—come to aid the imagination. Such was my good fortune here. The performer, all unconscious of the pleasure he was giving, was certainly a musician of no ordinary merit; well, at least that was my *impression.*

The next house of importance to the Manor House is Godfrey House, a remarkable pile of oak beams and yellow plaster, with overhanging stories and countless diamond window-panes. The porch bears the date 1587. Those who have leisure to roam about will find many other things of interest, not forgetting the old pilgrims' way to Canterbury, which passes through here and Lenham.

A few words may be said of Hucking and Bearsted, both equi-distant from Hollingbourne—about two miles as the crow flies (what a misleading bird, by the way, when one comes to measure out his feats by the pedometer!). Between the latter village and the main road there are some extraordinary old cottages, leaning in all sorts and conditions of angles. Bearsted Green is as cheerful

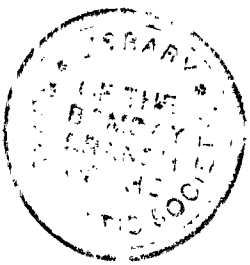
a little place as one could wish to see, evidently much given to local cricket matches. To reach Hucking we must again ascend to the high ground to the north-east, but a climb amid such pretty country as here surrounds us on all sides can never be wearying. Once more on the "backbone of



"The Hook and Hatchet."

Kent," should the "inner man" demand attention, we could not do better than partake of bread and cheese in the cosy little parlour of the "Hook and Hatchet," a tiny isolated inn, where one would imagine business could scarcely ever be brisk. The old-fashioned little apartment reminds one of the "Maypole" of Dickens on a miniature scale—a huge

chimney, with corner seats and a high-backed settle, where one could plant one's back on a winter's night and defy the most penetrating of north-easterly gales. Given but some blazing faggots in the ample grate, and who could differ with Dr. Johnson as to the comforts that are to be found away from one's own fireside?



CHAPTER III

BEFORE exploring the country to the south of Hollingbourne, I propose to introduce the reader to some of the old-world places to the north-west, and to reach these it will be the best plan to strike into the main road to Sittingbourne, and go thence back to Faversham, thus completing a triangle.

Beyond one or two good Tudor-built cottages, there is nothing particularly interesting to arrest our attention till we approach Bredgar—a sleepy-looking place, with a fine grey old church, standing as if placidly contemplating the surrounding tombstones. Within may be seen one of those obsolete pre-Victorian barrel organs, out of which they used to grind the hymns with a handle, and in the tower there are instructions (put up at the Commonwealth) that the bell-ringers must not perform their duties with their hats on, and if they should swear, the fine will be a penny.

There are some old houses worth notice, but

one of particular interest and charm calls us about a mile away in a secluded nook, where it hides itself as if it were not desirous of courting observation.

Bexon Manor House is a perfect picture of a compact little Elizabethan farmhouse. There are no incongruous additions to mar the complete harmony of this peaceful old homestead. To see it in the twilight with the warm glow of the western sky reflected in its myriad diamond-paned windows, with the tits darting in and out from beneath the deep projections of its eaves, is to see it at its best.

I visited Bexon on one of those glorious summer evenings when the whole of nature seems to rejoice in the warm bath of golden light. At such a time as this it seems impossible to conceive aught but universal harmony, or to associate humanity with any of its harsher traits. In the same way, it would be difficult to imagine that the reminiscences of which this old house could speak could be other than happy ones. Possibly if one came across Bexon on a dreary November day, it might be otherwise, and one might associate it with its recollections of sadder days. Perhaps it was the mellow light causing this general impression of cheerfulness or hospitality which prompted me with courage. I cannot say; but

I advanced towards the curious oak-carved porch to ask admittance.

It must be one of the penalties of living in a dwelling which has attractions for the antiquary to be thus intruded upon. One is quite aware—indeed, guiltily conscious—of the violation of that privacy which every Englishman is entitled to. Yet one does not scruple to ignore the promptings of etiquette. After repeated knocks it became pretty evident the house was empty, but, thinking that it would be as well to make a final onslaught at the back of the premises before abandoning all hope of viewing the interior, I wandered round by some old barns, where I succeeded in finding a caretaker, who willingly escorted me through the rambling corridors and dark panelled rooms. In the hall stood a splendid inlaid oak "shovel-board" table, coeval with the house. It was rescued not long ago from one of the farm buildings, where the labourers used to congregate for their mid-day meal.

Far from being one of those dismal crones whom one so often finds haunting an old house like an owl in a ruin, the caretaker of Bexon carried out my original impression as far as the house was concerned, and was the embodiment of cheerfulness

OLD HOUSE NEAR BREDGAR.

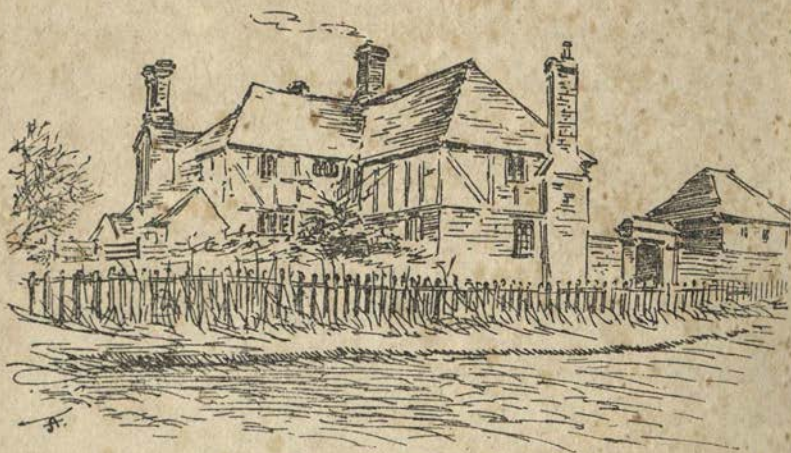
BEXON MANOR HOUSE.

and hospitality, and a bit of a wit into the bargain; so altogether I had no cause to regret my intrusion.

From Bexon let us now steer our way to Tunstall, a couple of miles or so away to the north. It is a very pretty village, with some good old houses. One charming red-brick Jacobean house stands back from the road, the gables and clock tower peeping over a high wall and imposing entrance gate. Grove End Farm, not far off, probably dates from the reign of Henry VII., or perhaps earlier. Inside may be seen an old kitchen, with hooded chimney and open roof to the rafters, black with age and soot—a primitive apartment, very much in the same condition (save its blackness) as when it was built. In this building formerly lived the Hales, an old Royalist Kentish family, the last representative of which—an aged maiden lady—died quite recently. There are some good monuments to the Hales in the church; one, particularly fine, was rescued by the present vicar, who discovered it lying in fragments in a stonemason's yard.

To the north-west of Tunstall is Borden, where the famous antiquary and naturalist, Dr. Plot, lies buried. In the church are preserved a curious pair

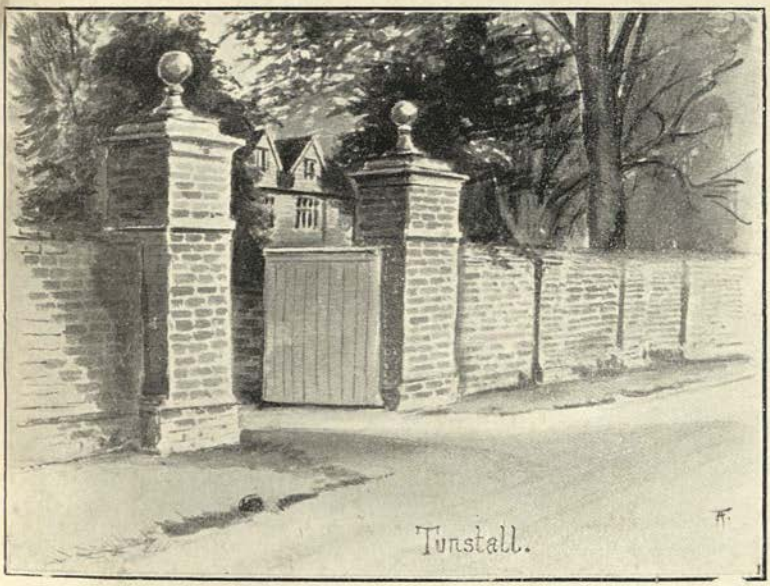
of seventeenth-century collection trays with handles. The inscriptions upon them read very much after the style of that upon the stone which was discovered by Mr. Pickwick. They run: "Give—willin—gly—give—chirev—llie." Sutton Barn and Heart's Delight, in this vicinity, are both picturesque old



Heart's Delight.

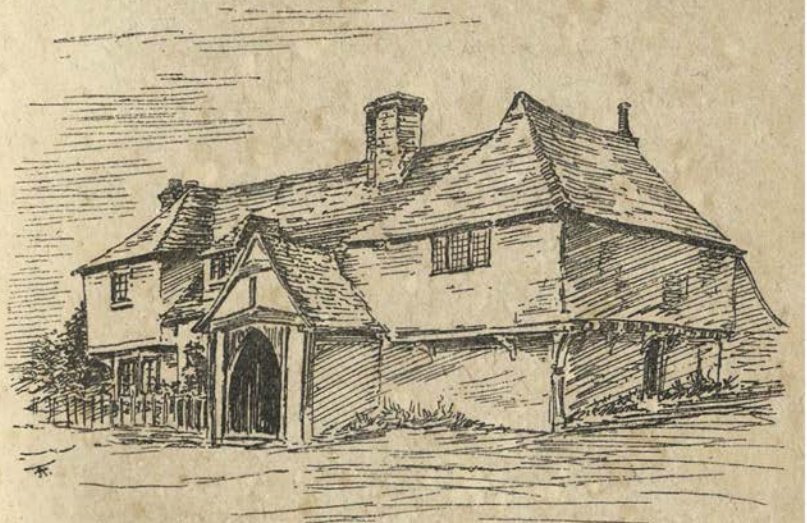
farmhouses. The peculiarity of the latter name led me to inquire of a yokel its significance. "Sure, I don't know," said he; "but it's a very old place, *and ought to be pulled down!*"

The immediate surroundings of Sittingbourne are not attractive. Brickmaking and other industries prevent the country from looking inviting. We will



GROVE END FARM.

avoid the town, notwithstanding the fact that that great king, Henry V., was once entertained at the "Rose Inn." Keeping to the lanes and bearing to the left, a very ancient cottage near Rodmersham is worth seeing for its Early Gothic entrance porch.



Old Farm near Rodmersham.

Near Green Street also are some good old farms. One in particular, down by the railway, is quite a unique example of early sixteenth-century lath-and-plaster work, not unlike some of the old "magpie" houses of Lancashire and Cheshire.

The churches of Tonge and Teynham, to the north-east and north-west of Green Street, are both

interesting. At the latter place the first cherry orchards are said to have been planted by one Richard Harris, fruiterer to King Henry VIII. Following the main road back to Faversham, there is not much to detain us. Round about Norton and Rushett, however, are some old inns and farms, which will repay one the trouble of going in search of them.

I now propose to explore the road which runs between Maidstone and Ashford, and to pick out the plums (as far as picturesque "bits" are concerned) which are to be found lying between that road and the level piece of railway which extends to the south of it—the "bee-line" that is said to have been passed by Parliament as it lay wet on the map fresh from the pen and ruler. Taking Lenham as a centre, we will follow the main road first in the direction of Maidstone, and then towards Ashford; after which we will work our way to the south, south-east, south-west, and west.

Lenham is certainly an old-world place, every inch of it. If one approaches it from the north, *via* Doddington (where the road branches off from that to Hollingbourne), there is a steady climb for some miles, until the welcome dip comes. The

OLD HOUSE, LENHAM.

OLD HOUSE NEAR TEYNHAM.

first thing that greets one at the foot of the chalk hills is a grim stone lock-up, which, judging by appearances, would afford far from comfortable accommodation, I should imagine. We now emerge upon a queer old square, which opens out to view by a curious old timber house at the corner. At another part of the square the churchyard is entered through a ponderous lych-gate. The Early English church of St. Mary has a good interior, including a fine roof, some interesting tombs, and a very uncommon stone sedille, or confessional chair, with projecting elbows. There is also a range of wooden stalls and a richly carved Jacobean pulpit bearing the date 1622.

An inscription on a tomb at Lenham records that a proud mother died with the satisfaction of knowing she left behind 367 children "lawfully descended" from her! Startling, certainly; but we read afterwards these included four generations. This may have been a great comfort in days when the census report had not reached its present gigantic proportions, but nowadays surely the knowledge of such a fact would be enough to make the poor woman turn in her grave.

If we continue our way through the square

westwards for a couple of hundred yards or so, we shall find a wonderfully perfect little timber house with carved brackets and a massive, though squat, chimney-stack in the centre. It is called "The Charity House," and well deserves all the admiration that is lavished upon it by passers-by.

My first introduction to Lenham, by the way, was marked by an incident quite unique as far as my experience goes. I had just crossed the little river Len (which rises in this parish and flows into the Medway) when a very "heavy"-looking swell (whom at first I took to be an American millionaire who resides at Pluckley, a few miles away), driving a particularly smart turn-out, pulled up his high stepper and with breathless anxiety inquired if I had seen—his wife! For the moment I was staggered, but, regaining my composure, I learned that the lady in question had been instructed to follow the road I had been traversing, while her husband went elsewhere upon some mission which would occupy about an hour; and that when the gentleman returned, he discovered to his alarm that his spouse had vanished. She evidently had taken the wrong turning, and was then—heaven knows where. Moreover, she was purseless and a stranger in the land. The couple

"CHARITY HOUSE," LENHAM.

OLD HOUSE, HARRIETSHAM.

hailed from miles away, and had to catch a return train from somewhere, with scarcely a minute to spare to catch that train!

What could one do in such a situation but offer one's poor services? It was hastily decided that each should beat up the country in different directions, and return to a particular signpost at the cross-roads.

I hunted for half an hour in vain, but at length I espied the distinguishing "blue blouse" for which I had been straining my eyes. It was centred in a small group of school-children, who were undergoing a cross-examination as to whether they had seen a certain trap that way. I rushed to the rescue. "Pardon me, madam," said I; "have you lost your husband?" "Yes," she cried, with tears in her eyes; "where is he?" "If you will confide yourself to my care for a moment," I replied, "I will restore him to you." Further details are superfluous. Suffice it to say that the dilemma wound up like the conclusion to an old-fashioned novel.

Never did one receive such an ovation of gratitude! I had it impressed upon me that if ever I visited such and such a town I should be greeted with a right royal reception. I doubt not that I should, but I have never been.

CHAPTER IV

KEEPING to the main road from Lenham towards Maidstone, the next village is Harrietsham, whose fine church stands isolated at the foot of a steep hill leading to the old seat of the Stede family (a lonely looking Georgian mansion, with barns and stables of a much earlier period). The Perpendicular tower of Harrietsham Church is lofty and peculiarly graceful. The interior, with the exception of a beautiful screen, has been much restored, and, to my mind, spoiled. Part of the village—that lying just off the high road—is as typical an old village street as one could wish to see, and one old timber house in particular is in a remarkable state of preservation. Still bearing to the west, we presently get a glimpse, among the dense foliage to the left, of the historical castle of Leeds, which, though modernised, dates from the reign of Edward I., with additions of Henry VIII.'s time, suggestive, in parts, of Haddon. This stately

OLD HOUSE, LEEDS.

OLD HOUSE, LEEDS.

looking mass of towers and turrets is reflected in a wide moat as clear as crystal, across which stretches an Edwardian bridge leading to the most picturesque of old red-roofed gatehouses. Not a few tragic events have happened within the walls of this peaceful-looking feudal castle, for here it was that the Queen of King Henry IV. was imprisoned for a supposed conspiracy against the life of her stepson; and the wife of Humphrey Plantagenet, Duke of Gloucester, tried for practising witchcraft.

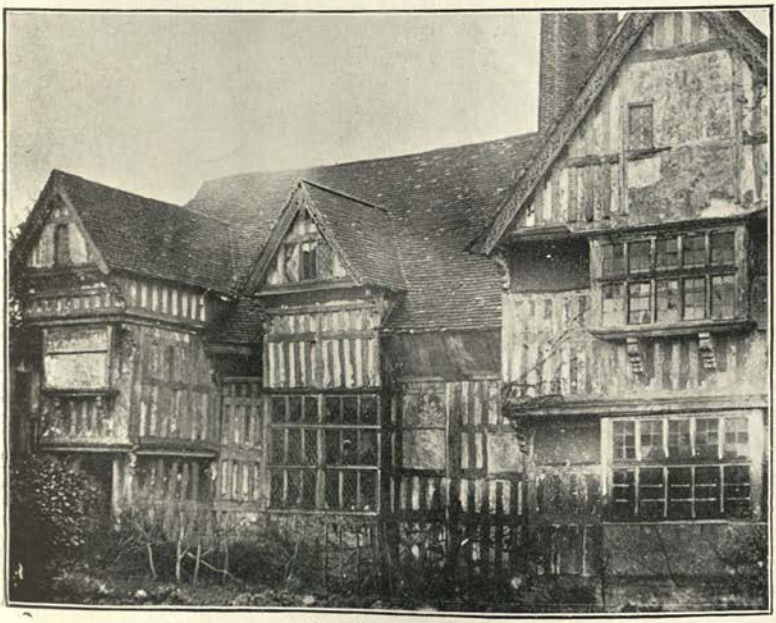
At a part of the main road that skirts the park, the scenery is most beautiful, especially by a clump of graceful firs with a forest of feathery bracken beneath—the whole very suggestive of one of the favourite subjects of that popular painter, B. W. Leader, R.A.

A little to the left of the road, nearer to Hollingbourne, is the village of Leeds, one of the prettiest villages in Kent, and exceptionally rich in old houses. By a turn of the lane and beyond a little brook is a large cottage of five gables, a good specimen of a Jacobean brick and timber house, but one of those tantalising subjects which so often defy the efforts of the amateur photographer. It stands in the shade of overhanging trees, and when the sun

shines, with patches of light all over it—beautiful to the eye, but confusion when reproduced by the camera. And how often does not one find, that a particularly pleasing "bit" that one would give anything to secure, is rendered impossible by a strong light being immediately behind it! Certainly, in many instances, one may get between the object and the eastern or western sky, which ever may be the case, without trespassing; but invariably it has been my experience that, having gained that vantage ground, the "bit" has lost all its attractiveness from a picturesque or architectural point of view.

Passing an older house with stone Gothic windows, we next come to the church of St. Nicholas, with its very broad, squat, extinguisher-surmounted tower that can boast of the finest peal of bells (so I was informed) in the county. Farther on in the village street, down in the hollow, is another old cottage of timber with gracefully carved oak tracery in the windows; and at the back of it stands an ancient mill, even more picturesque, with two great overhanging gables looking into a stream-girt orchard on the opposite side of the road. The most remarkable old house, however, anywhere in this district, is one at Langley, about two miles from

OLD HOUSE, BROMFIELD.



OLD HOUSE, LANGLEY.

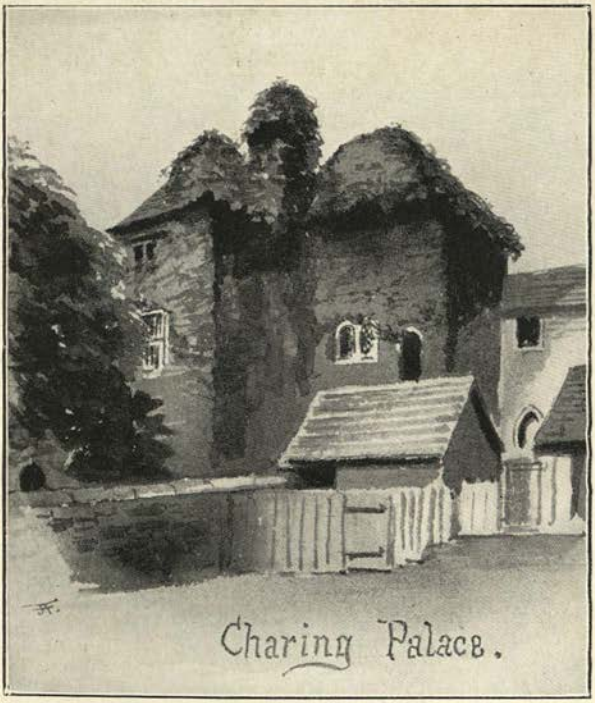
Leeds. I took a photograph of this some years ago, but upon a recent visit I searched for it in vain, and at length came to the conclusion that fire or house-breakers had wiped it off the face of the earth. There were on all sides new roads, new walls, and new lodge gates. The land adjoining the old house certainly had been bought up and enclosed. Departing in sorrow and ruminating at the fate of my old house, what was my delight when I caught a glimpse of one of its quaint timber gables. Yes, there it stood intact, but with additions expanding it into quite double its original size, as far as I could make out from my side of the new boundary wall. As is now the case with so many of our smaller houses with any pretensions to ancient architecture, it had been converted into a mansion—raised, like many a beautiful village maiden, to a high social position.

Before going eastwards along the main road from Lenham and Charing, we may give a passing glance at Bromfield, rambling up the side of a hill and having one of those primitive pathways of slabs of stone such as are seen in the old Somersetshire villages.

At Charing there is plenty to see in the shape

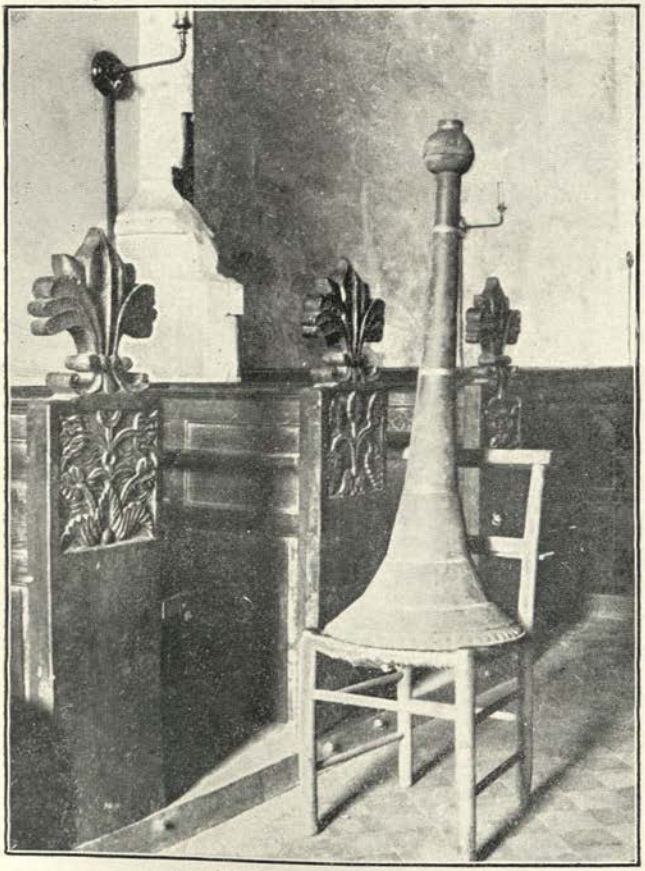
of antiquities, from the ruins of the Episcopal Palace to the enormous trumpet through which the parish clerk used to announce the hymns. There is a good Elizabethan roof in the church (which is cruciform), some carved bench-ends, and interesting monuments. The vicar happened to be in the church when I was strolling round, and courteously pointed out some of its distinguishing features, and I can well understand the evident pride he takes in it. The ivy-grown remains of the palace are close to the church. Part of it is occupied as a farmhouse and is strikingly picturesque. In the irregular line of the old gables and chimneys of the village street, many subjects may be found for a "snapshot"—the "Swan Inn," for example, or an old timber butcher's shop, or another gabled house with wide Tudor entrance gate and carved oak spandrils.

The remainder of the high road between Charing and Ashford is not particularly attractive, but there are one or two good old farmhouses—Acton, of brick, and Wickens, of half-timber, being especially worth notice. In a park off to the right is Godington, a fine old mansion with quaint oak carvings—a stag hunt represented round the frieze of a panelled room, and some extraordinary monsters guarding the several



Charing Palace.

CHARING.



SPEAKING TRUMPET, CHARING.

OLD HOUSE NEAR ASHFORD.

landings of a wide oak staircase. Turning now to the west and keeping to the lanes, we may visit Pluckley and the ancient seat of the Derings, a very important Kentish family. The stately red-brick gabled house, with its velvety lawns and terraces, conjures up

visionary forms of gaily-clad cavaliers and damsels in full-sleeved silken gowns, and gives one a general impression of ancestral grandeur. Even the gorgeously plumed peacocks strut about as if self-conscious of long lineage. To be further impressed with the importance of the owners of the house one has but to look

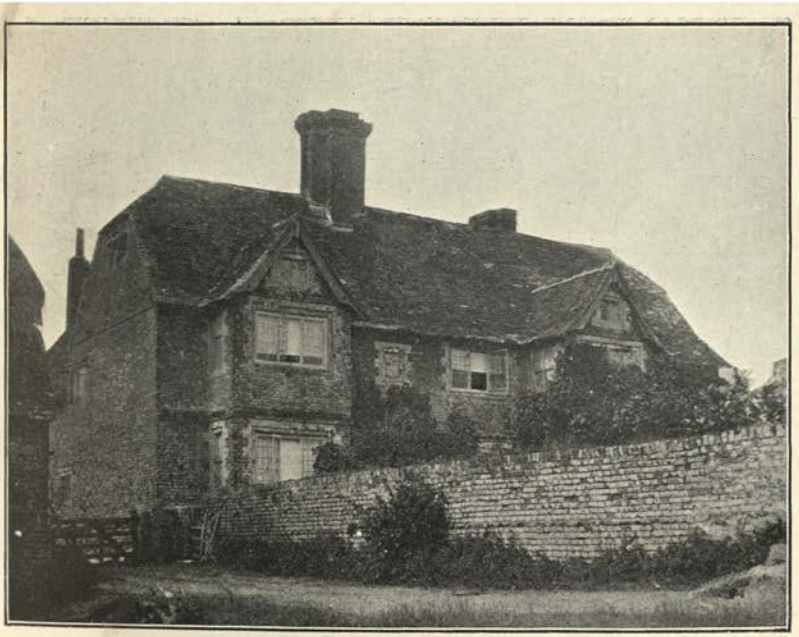
at the ancestral pew in the church. Never have I seen in a holy edifice such luxurious accommodation.

Pluckley stands high and commands a lovely view over the surrounding country. I have recollections left of a comfortable inn, with an attractive old-fashioned garden ; moreover, of a very excellent tea.

Not far away is the church of Little Chart, where one is struck by the peculiarity that, though the rest of the interior is in a good state of repair, an old chapel of the Darells in the side aisle is in a most grievous state of damp and mildew, and this is the more to be deplored because the monuments here are particularly interesting.

To the north-west we pass through Egerton, a sleepy place with a good church perched up on a little knoll, but there are few old buildings, save one with a pretty gable end and a rather good late seventeenth-century house. Continuing in the same direction through a stretch of genuinely beautiful rural country, a couple of miles or so will bring us to Boughton Malherbe, a secluded manor house, church, and vicarage, and a few scattered cottages, which can scarcely be classified as a village.

Coming by the road from Harrietsham with the object of finding Boughton, a tourist would imagine



ACTON FARM.

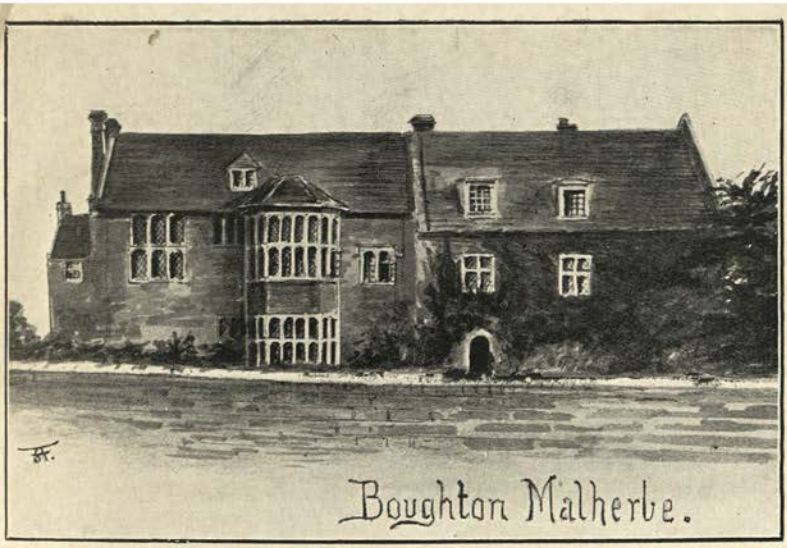
WICKENS.

that the signpost pointing to Boughton Church was a kind of mild practical joke, for he most certainly would miss his mark and find himself at a place called Grafton Green (where the parish stocks may be seen), a mile beyond. He would have passed a turning, to be sure, but the signpost at that spot is silent as far as Boughton is concerned. I suppose it is left to one's imagination, intuitive perception, or bump of locality, but I can only say, when once found, like Captain Cuttle's maxim, it is best to make a note of it.

The roof, the bench-ends, the fifteenth-century pulpit in the church, are all good—the brasses, too, depicting ladies in their pointed head-dresses and brave knights in their elaborate Gothic armour. A mural tablet to Dr. Lionel Sharpe explains that he was chaplain to the Earl of Essex and afterwards to good Queen Bess, and after her to Prince Henry, and, lastly, to King James. The font cover and the poor-box are also worth notice. There is one thing, however, about Boughton Church which I do not admire—viz., its highly coloured porch, decorated by the late vicar with blue, white, red, and yellow in "the Italian style." Whether this ecclesiastical artist belonged to the "impressionist school," I

cannot say. Those painters one used to hear of so much, formerly, are surely now almost extinct—or are the disciples of Aubrey Beardsley impressionists? They are certainly not realists. To those who would know the distinction between these schools, I may quote a very good rule to bear in mind, which I read somewhere. An artist who paints the sky blue and the grass green is a "realist," whereas an artist who paints the sky green and the grass blue is an "impressionist"; moreover, an artist who paints the sky black and the grass red is a "decorative artist." But I doubt whether the porch of Boughton Church can be classified under any of these. It certainly is neither a "harmony" nor a "symphony" in blue, white, red, and yellow.

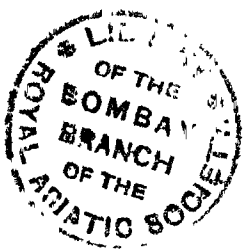
The Manor House, near the church, is a curious old building, with great Elizabethan bay windows. Formerly there was a grand old panelled drawing-room, with a coved ornamental ceiling—alas! now divided up into several apartments, though it may still be seen in sections. Queen Elizabeth's bedroom, with carvings and tapestry, is also here; not one of those mythical so-called halting-places of her Majesty one so often comes across, for I believe the Queen really did come here on one of her progresses. The park



OLD HOUSE, CHARING.

which once belonged to the house is now incorporated in the vicarage demesne. Here are some gigantic trees,—ash, chestnut, and Turkish oak,—trees of great age and immense girth. The vicarage is a quaint old house, cased in early weather-tiling, with a circular and a square tower, and gables and corners everywhere.

The vicar, who kindly showed me the various points of interest in the house and park, evidently has a thorough knowledge and keen appreciation of all matters relating to the study of natural history and botany, and for one with such tastes to live in such a beautiful spot as this must give a particular charm to existence.



CHAPTER V

FROM Boughton Malherbe it is an easy walk to Ulcomb, whose church, prominently situated on very high ground, should be visited for its splendid early brasses, a good screen, and some curious fourteenth-century frescoes. Sir Ralph Sentleger and his wife Anne are represented in two very fine brasses, giving one a good idea of the costume and armour of the middle of the fifteenth century. An earlier brass, with elaborate canopy, is that of Sir William Maydeston, and is one of the finest examples extant.

Headcorn, a few miles away to the south, is situated in the wide expanse of level country to the south of the second range of hills that one crosses coming from Sittingbourne way. It is a pretty little place, surrounded by orchards and hop-gardens, and is rich in examples of early domestic architecture. To the north of the village, on the road to Maidstone, is an old farmstead called " Moat-in-

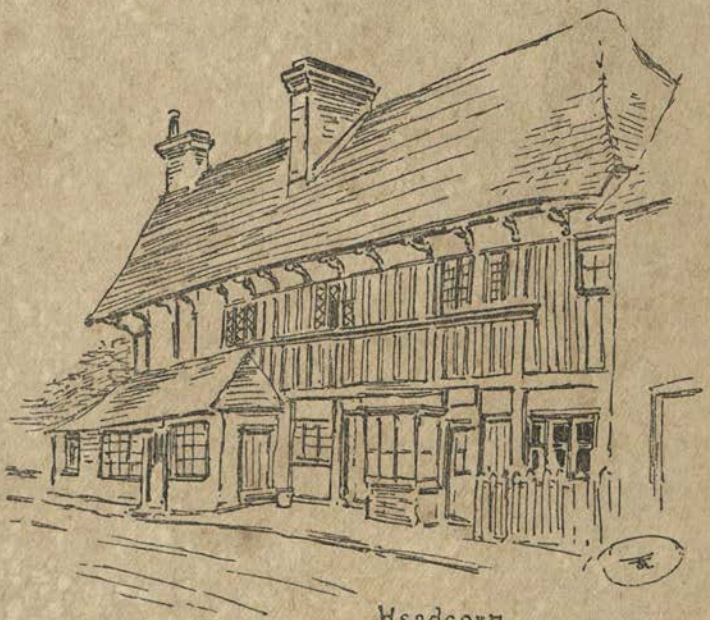
den" (corrupted to "Mutton-den"), once upon a time a monastery. I stopped here when I was a youngster, and have a vivid recollection of the mystery which the weed-grown moat inspired, and

Headcorn.

of the ghostly effect of owls screeching in the dead of night.

Everything ends with "den" in this part of Kent. There are Devil's-dens and Chickendens, Hungerden, Bletchenden, Frittenden, and many other "dens" which I shall visit ere I say good-bye to the county.

Continuing on the road to Maidstone, about three and a half miles from Headcorn is the most beautiful village of Sutton Valence. Fortunately the railway has not yet reached this most attractive and healthy district, otherwise I doubt not Sutton



Headcorn.

Valence would be one of those popular resorts which grow with rapid strides. Ulcomb, which we have just visited, now lies to the east of us, about two miles, and between is East Sutton, which has a picturesque grey old church of the fourteenth century, enclosed by a ruinous ivy-grown stone wall forming a charm-

ing foreground. There are some good tombs here to the Filmer and Argall families. Upon one of these are represented the brass effigies of the eighteen children of Sir Edmund Filmer—a noble array of sons and daughters in the costume of Charles the First's time. A family likeness, or rather want of expression, is well sustained through the whole group.

East Sutton is one of those churches where you have to go a considerable journey for the key if you wish to get inside. It is not be procured at the vicarage, or, as is sometimes the case, at the school-rooms, but at a windmill situated about a mile away. Any one, however, will be well repaid for the trouble of going there, for it is a model mill placed in a charming garden—or, rather, grounds I should say, of the miller's residence—the prettiest of cottages. Who would not be a miller under such circumstances? The prevailing cheerfulness of the house and garden found a harmonious accompaniment in its occupant, for a more jolly, light-hearted young miller it would be difficult to conceive. A mill, whether water or wind be the locomotive power (I won't include steam), has always had a great attraction for me. There is such a *clean smell* about its bins of grain and its atmosphere of flour.

"Won't you come up and have a look round," said the custodian of the church key from a lofty eminence in his wooden castle. I clambered up a precipitous staircase and had the ingenious and intricate machinery explained to me. The sieves for the finest flour were bags of silk, through which one would think it impossible for any substance to pass. This may be nothing new to my readers, but as it was a bit of a mystery to me, I record the fact.

Ascending to an external platform, we stood to admire the lovely view, and at the same time to speculate upon the prospect of wind, it having some time before dropped to a dead calm. Returning to the inside of the cone, my host picked up a novel, and observed that occasionally he had time for recreation, "Though," said he, "when a good north-easter is blowing, we're pretty busy." Presently came a complication of rumbling, straining, creaking noises, and everything was in motion, but only for a moment. The puff of wind died away, and I left my companion wrapped in the plot of his story.

East Sutton Place is a well-restored Elizabethan mansion in a large park; its red pointed gables peep over the wall of the churchyard and light up the prevailing grey. Charlton Court, about a mile

to the east, is another old house—Jacobean—with very uncommon projecting angular windows, standing in the trimmest of trim gardens. The good lady of the house, who showed me an elaborately carved oak staircase, was not a little indignant that some archæological society had recently visited the locality without honouring her with a visit. The members of the society were the losers, surely, to miss so interesting an item from their programme. But I have known places where those of antiquarian tastes would have met with a different reception. A nervous but enthusiastic friend of mine once knocked at a cottage door in South Devon, and, hat in hand, meekly observed to the strong-minded-looking lady who answered the summons, "Madam, I understand you have some ancient carving in your bedroom?" "No, I ain't," she indignantly responded, and banged the door in his face in a manner as much as to imply that even the thought of such a possession cast reflections upon her moral character. My friend, never so successful as myself in missions of this nature, satirically suggests that I should issue a handbook called "Trespassing made Easy."

Bordering the road near Charlton is the loftiest thorn hedge I have ever seen. It is quite twenty feet

high and looks so narrow and slender that one would think that a good stiff breeze would blow it down. But it must have mastered a good many storms in its day.

We have been to Langley, to the north of Sutton Valence, so we will now strike westwards, cross-country, to another Boughton—Boughton Monchelsea. Though the name is a good mouthful, like the other Boughton there is scarcely any village to speak of save a great ancient barn with tall dormer windows near the church. A fine old lych-gate leads into the churchyard. The entrance even in summer is almost perpetually in the shade, and in the twilight there is something ghoulish about the crumbling array of moss-grown tombstones. But there is a wonderful contrast when we get to the back of the churchyard. All is sunshine here, and such a profusion of flowers—one blaze of colour; and beyond, over the tree-tops of some park adjacent, such a glorious view.

I am not at all given to ruminating in churchyards. To me, the majority have a depressing effect; but this one was an exception, and I can hardly imagine a more cheerful spot than the back of this garden-like burial ground. On the low

boundary wall (which twines here and there like the body of a huge snake) I sat for half an hour enjoying the scene and the delicious scent of the old-fashioned red roses with which the air was filled.

How strange it is that a scent like this, coming upon one unawares, can bring back to one's memory an impression of some incident with which it is connected in some mysterious way!—a long-forgotten recollection vivid as lightning, but gone as instantaneously—gone before the brain has had time to model the impression into shape; some strange association which, during its hundredth part of a second's existence, was replete with the minutest detail, yet which as instantaneously has vanished beyond all recall. One tries as hopelessly to get some clue to it as a freshly awakened sleeper endeavours to recount the vivid incidents of a dream. In passing along the country lanes in summer time, I have often noticed that a sudden scent of honeysuckle, or perhaps of a lime-tree, has had this strange effect; but I have also observed that the snapshot, revival, or impression, whatever we may call it, invariably comes *unawares*, and that, like an over-exposed negative, the more we try to develop it by coaxing, the denser it becomes.

I do not propose to journey much farther in a westerly direction, much as I should like to revisit such places as Ightham and Knole; but these are far-famed, and the country round has been well trodden by the tourist.

The villages of Aylesford, Allington, Malling, and Offham have also each their several attractions in point of picturesqueness and antiquarian interest.

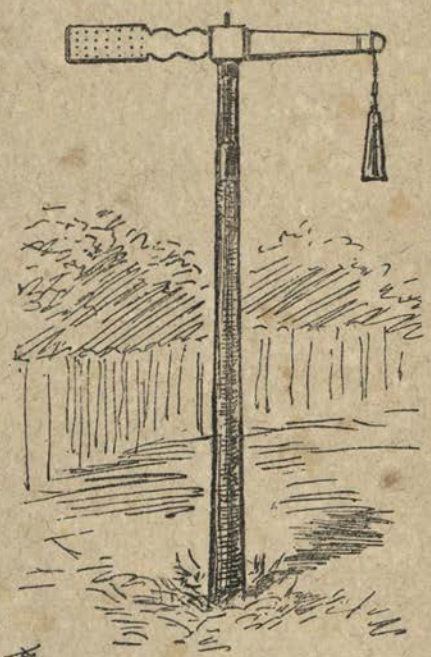
The quintain on Offham Green is unique, though it is only a copy of the original which some years ago was to be seen embedded much deeper into the ground than in the present instance. Perhaps it is needless to state that the game was introduced into these islands by the Romans, and became a recognised sport about the reign of Henry III. I need scarcely add that the horseman's object, running full tilt at it, was to break the broad cross-piece of the swinging top without receiving a stunning blow on the back by the sand-bag hung at its other end. The most skilful at this obsolete pastime received a peacock as his prize. Formerly there was another quintain at Deddington, in Oxfordshire, but this has been done away with many years.

To the south of Malling and Offham are the remains of St. Leonard's Castle, beyond which stretch

TOWN HOUSE, IGHTHAM.

ROLLESTON FARM.

the beautiful Mereworth woods, and, still farther south, East and West Peckham. I recently visited these two last villages, with the object of localising a spot mentioned in the well-known *Memoirs* of the Count de Gramont. The neighbourhood is there described as the most solitary and dreary, and the lapse of nearly two centuries and a half has not made any perceptible difference to it in this respect; indeed, one can hardly wonder that the beautiful Mrs. Wetenhall found life almost unbearable in such a lonely place.



Quintain at Offham.

The churches of East and West Peckham look close enough together on the map, but to get from one to the other is no easy matter, for the roads turn and twist here, there, and everywhere but where one wants them to turn; and if one would travel cross-country, the way is equally difficult. A sort of wild, primæval bridle-

path certainly leads from the main road in the direction of West Peckham, but it appears to be the exclusive property of gipsies, who resent intrusion.

The little church of the latter village contains a good example of a memorial Jacobean pew, from which the squire and his family could look down upon the rest of the congregation with superior complacency. The East Peckham folk have to climb to a considerable elevation to reach their place of worship, so there is some excuse if the attendance is not very great.

OF THE
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CHAPTER VI

TO return for a short space to the "dens" of which I have spoken, we shall have to strike in a south-easterly direction from the Peckhams, through Yalding. I had heard much of the beauty of this place, and expected great things, but must confess I was sadly disappointed—doubtless mainly owing to the fact that, after a long drought, the river, its most attractive feature, was nearly dry, and the fine old bridge, for which Yalding is famous, did not look at its best by any means. Another thing which did not improve the peacefulness of the scene was, the village was full of noisy hoppers, so I got out of it as speedily as possible, after having a look at the old Court Lodge—a red Jacobean house, with windows shaded by the gigantic limbs of a cedar-tree. There were evidences of a recent sale, and, an open gate inviting inspection, I took the opportunity of doing a little harmless trespassing in the old garden and orchard.

Marden is about five miles from Yalding, and Horsmonden, another four. There are many ancient buildings in and about these villages, the adjacent farmsteads of Patten*den*, Spelmon*den*, and Twissen*den* being particularly worth notice.

Goudhurst, to the south-east, is one of the most attractively situated villages I have ever seen. Like Sutton Valence, it should have a great future, but I should be very sorry to hear of the speculative builder finding his way there.

The impression left on my memory of Goudhurst is a mountainous climb up to the church and adjacent houses on a very brilliant Sunday morning in summer. It was long before service, and the place appeared to be entirely deserted. Fortunately the church was open; I could inspect the monuments with comfort alone, and not under the usual supervision of the pew-opener or parish clerk. Upon an ancient altar-tomb was spread a snow-white tablecloth, upon which stood a goodly array of loaves ready for some impending dole. I could not help thinking what an opportunity this would have been for some hungry tramp—not the ordinary thirsty tramp one so often meets upon the roads, but a man, say, upon his "last legs" for want of food. Supposing now, in such a

BIDDENDEN.

OLD HOUSE, BIDDENDEN.

case, if a starving man did thus help himself, I wonder if the law would call it stealing. I draw my own conclusions from a case I saw some time ago in the papers of a hungry man rushing into a baker's shop and seizing a halfpenny roll, for which crime he received a sentence of (I forget the actual number of days or weeks) hard labour. Now, if the magistrate had refunded the baker with his halfpenny and let the wretched thief go free, I suppose that would not be justice.

Goudhurst is more like a Sussex village, most of the houses being built, in part, of the characteristic red and black tiling one sees so much in that county.

To get to Benen*den*, Rolven*den*, or Newen*den*, the tourist would go (from Goudhurst) through Cranbrook, one of the cleanest and most prosperous-looking little towns imaginable, with a long hill running down into it and a long hill leading out of it, a cathedral-like Perpendicular church (in which are helmets and banners) and several pretty old houses, many of them once upon a time factories of the clothing trade, which flourished here for centuries.

Suppose now we draw a triangle on the map of Kent—from Staplehurst to Newen*den* (as the most southerly point), and to Ashford as the farthest

the story how he went into the wilds of Cornwall, to a tiny place some twelve or fourteen miles from the railroad, and after a weary journey, upon arriving at the little bar-parlour of the inn, some rude individual thrust his head over a partition, and, looking hard at the tragedian, muttered, "*The Bells*"!

Of all the village "dens," Bidden*den* and Smar*den* are the most attractive from an antiquarian point of view. The former is a typical old-world village, containing many curious examples of cottage architecture. In the church are some good brasses and a fine Perpendicular screen. Some centuries ago there lived here a certain Eliza and Mary Chalkhurst, twins who had the misfortune to be joined together by the hips and shoulders; and, doubtless, had they lived in these times, they would have found their way to Barnum's show. The poor of Biddenden have cause to remember these ladies, for they receive from their charity every Easter a plentiful supply of bread and cheese and some flat cakes made of flour and water (certainly not rich pastry), stamped with the grotesque figures of their unfortunate benefactresses. But everybody has heard of these famous Biddenden maids and cakes.

The "Old Red Lion Inn" has a bar-parlour with oak rafters and some nice old gables at the back. I remember spending a very wet Whitsuntide here many years ago with a boon companion, and how, mackintoshed and legginged, we set forth to find "The Monkey House," Vane House, Ash House, Park House, the Manor House of Smarden, and many others. The various entrances to Smarden by the church at the extreme end of the street, I remember, gave us an impression of the stage of a theatre. The inhabitants made their several "exits and their entrances" in a way that the supers appear and disappear in the scenes of a melodrama. The rest of my recollections of Smarden are hazy, though we partook of nothing stronger than tea there. The negatives I took upon this occasion, I am glad to find, are much clearer than my memory.

One little incident, however, I do recollect, which occurred somewhere hereabouts. During the inspection of an old cottage, the good lady who resided in it observed, with self-conscious importance, "You *might* not believe it, sir, but this house is over eighteen hundred years old!" I said I did *not* believe it. "But," said she, "the date is on the outside." I went to look. Yes, there were some

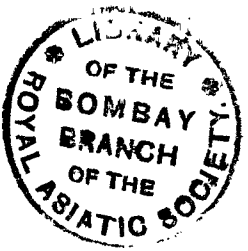
SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE.

SMARDEN MANOR HOUSE.

OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN.

OLD HOUSE, SMARDEN.

figures and some letters, which read, as far as I could make out, either "A.D." or "B.C. 34." But what spoiled the whole effect was the badge of some insurance company above it! That these old timber houses don't more frequently get burned to the ground is astonishing, when we consider the risks they run. I have seen in the very heart of one of them a chimney formed merely of a wooden framework filled in with plaster, and the old house is still alive to boast its recklessness.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER VII

I PROPOSE now to cross the border into the adjoining county of Sussex in search of some of the more important houses, or rather mansions, that have degenerated into farmhouses. To go systematically through the county describing these in detail would require a volume to themselves, so I will only here make a few selections.

In a walk, say, from Hawkhurst, close upon the border of the two counties, to Lewes, one can find many good examples of Elizabethan domestic architecture which are rendered doubly attractive from the beautifully wooded country in which they are situated. Not a few are to be found in and about the pretty village of Burwash (locally pronounced Burrish), beyond Etchingham. Two fine old mansions (they were farms when I saw them) are Batemans and Holmshurst. The interiors of both are interesting, particularly the latter, there being some good stone fireplaces, ceilings, panelled rooms, and a gallery

TANNERS.

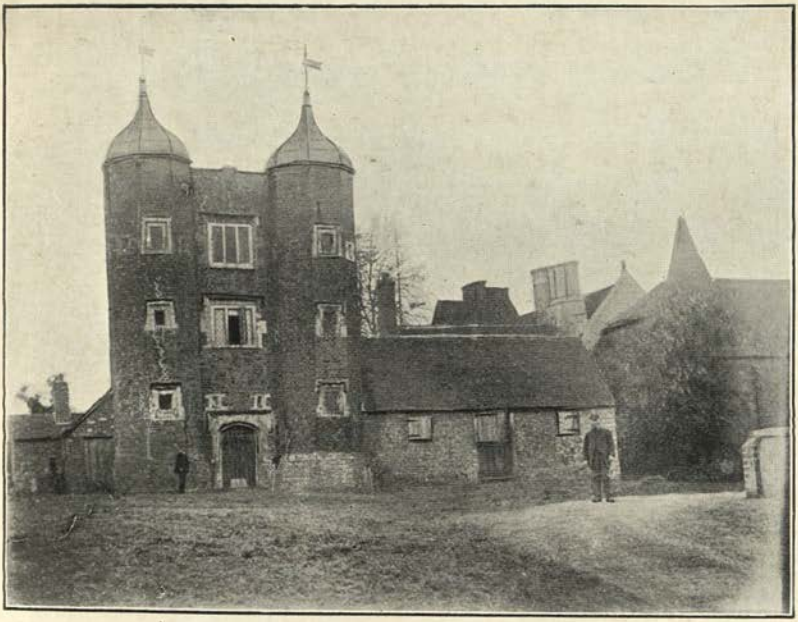
HOLMSHURST.

seventy feet in length. I understand that one of the most popular writers of the day has recently purchased Batemans.

Porch
Batemans

Around Waldron there are also many good Elizabethan houses having great chimney clusters and deep-set mullioned windows, such as Tanners and Possingworth, and, farther south, Shoesmiths, Friths, and Horeham.

One of the most picturesque of all the Sussex farmhouses, in my opinion, is Bolebrook, between Cowden (on the northern boundary of the county) and Hartfield. The approach to the turreted Tudor gatehouse and adjoining group of old barns and sheds, by a narrow winding lane from the main road, is exceedingly fascinating. It is the colour of these out-buildings that is so pleasing to the eye. Nothing but age can impart to the red bricks that purple-grey tone which harmonises so well with the moss and lichen; and apart from the colour, of course it is the long narrow bricks and the wide intersections of mortar of old masonry that so adds to the pleasing effect of the whole. Beyond the gatehouse is the lofty gabled mansion, which, when silhouetted against the evening light, looks more like some enchanted palace from a fairy tale. Wandering about its many disused rooms at nightfall, a more ghostly place it would be difficult to imagine. As you grope your way up the wide oak staircase, you are conscious of silent white spectres floating about. It is, however, nothing more uncanny than owls, who find congenial seclusion upon the upper landings for their day-dreams after a heavy night's debauch; and for their food they need not go far,



BOLEBROOK.

BOLEBROOK.

as in the adjacent deserted chambers there are very audible scamperings of mice and rats, not to mention a small colony of bats which find their way in through the cracks and crevices and broken diamond panes of the old casements. No; Bolebrook is, I should say, not a pleasant place to spend a happy night. I almost think I should prefer Newnham during the cherry season.

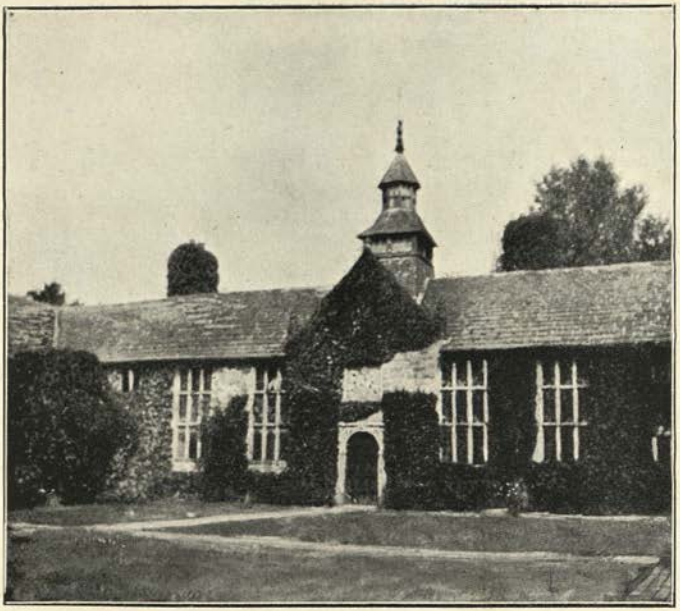
In one of the lower rooms there is a monster fireplace—I shouldn't like to say how many feet or yards across. One might certainly roast within it half a dozen whole oxen if necessary.

The good farmer who lives, or lived, here let me go about the house much as I pleased, and it has always been a great regret to me that a photo I took, or rather attempted to take, of his little boy, turned out an utter failure, so I could not even make a slight return for his hospitality. Nothing is more exasperating than a disaster of this sort. You make a great flourish and give a lot of trouble all for nothing, and I should imagine feel the same unpleasant sensations that the artist feels who has held a private view and finds his works rejected by the Academy.

The country between the three towns of East

Grinstead, Cuckfield, and Uckfield is also a rich hunting ground for those in search of the picturesque, and includes some of the finest examples of Elizabethan and Jacobean architecture in the county, and that most lovely stretch of primæval forest, Ashdown, into the bargain.

East Grinstead is full of old houses, with moss-grown stone tiles and oak mullioned windows. One lofty old timber house has at the back a most charming little stone Jacobean porch, with steps leading down into the garden. Opposite on high ground stands the almshouse, Sackville College, also of early Jacobean date, whose interior quadrangle, with its smooth grass plots and picturesque gables, looks the most inviting of dwellings. The door of the chapel has a most elaborate and complicated lock, which, if it got out of order, I fancy would puzzle the locksmiths of to-day to repair. The hall is full of oak carvings and old furniture, and has a fine screen, roof, and fireplace, and in the old kitchen is quite a collection of ancient fire-dogs, which I understand came from the neighbouring mansion of Buckhurst. The curfew is still rung here regularly at eight in the summer and seven in the winter, after which the residents of the almshouse



SACKVILLE COLLEGE.

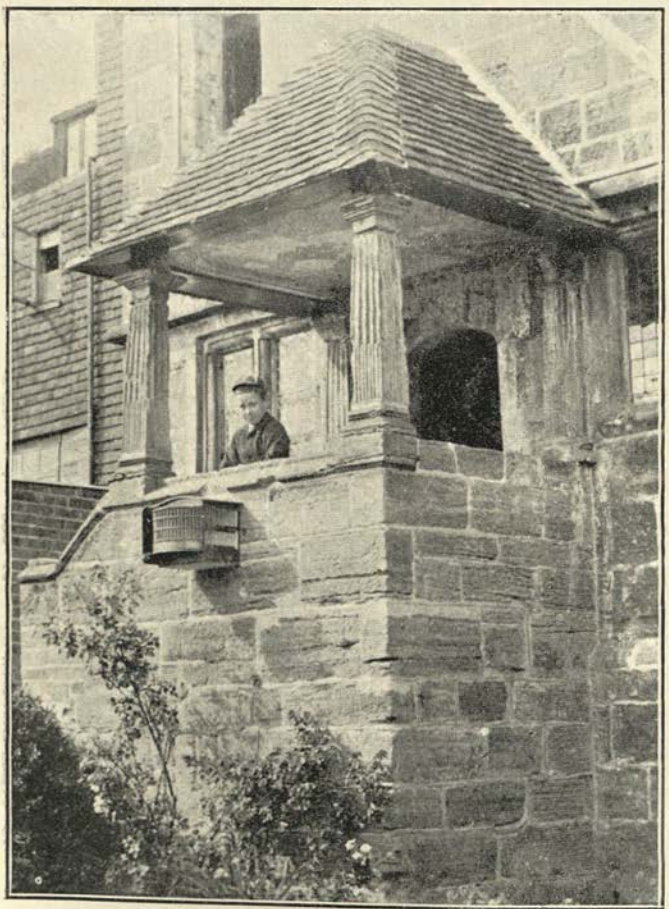
BRAMBLETYE HOUSE.

are locked in for the night, but I question if the aged inmates would get into any mischief if the doors were left open.

Not far from the town, on the extreme outskirts of Ashdown Forest, are the substantial ivy-clad ruins of Brambletye House, one of the Royalist mansions which were destroyed by the powder of the Lord Protector. Lovers of old-fashioned romance who have never read Horace Smith's novel bearing the name of this mansion would find in its healthy pages a refreshing change after some of the fashionable literature of to-day.

The impression left by West Hoathly, situated upon high ground a few miles to the south-west, is a vivid one to me, for here I had the misfortune to lose a five-pound note. As a proof that I am by no means accustomed to travel about with such useful accompaniments, I may state that my mind was sadly disturbed when I discovered the crisp piece of paper was missing, and in no way could I account for it until a few days afterwards an inquiry at "The Cat" at West Hoathly resulted in the missing article being found still lying upon the floor of a dark passage, in which I afterwards remembered I opened a pocket-book to get out a map.

This accident recalls two others, which I may venture to relate, as both of them were somewhat extraordinary. Returning from a walk one evening along the seashore at Charmouth, near Lyme Regis, I found that a valued little trinket from my watch-chain was missing. The case seemed hopeless, as the tide had risen and obliterated for ever all clue as to footprints in the sand showing the direction I had gone. But next day, what was my astonishment, in taking a walk the same way and glancing casually along the ground, to see the little truant glittering in the sunshine. The other incident is as remarkable. While staying at an old mill near Sherborne, Dorsetshire, I was one afternoon occupied with that favourite holiday pastime and intellectual amusement of lazily throwing stones into the mill-stream, when, all of a sudden (as in the case of the absent-minded man, consulting his watch while similarly engaged, throwing away his timepiece and pocketing the stone), off flew a ring right into the middle of the stream. Here, again, the case seemed hopeless. The sequel is not that hackneyed story of a fish swallowing it and being served up hot the next morning for breakfast. That is an angler's story, and we all know that there are three



OLD HOUSE, EAST GRINSTEAD.

grades of storytellers: a liar, a—well, great liar, and a fisherman. No, nothing of this sort. That noble art is not in my line. My sequel is true. The water having run to its lowest level over the mill-wheel, ground the corn, and in a measure helped to smooth the sharp chiselled edges of the grindstone, the traps were opened, and the stream, so to speak, was run dry. Then the thick mud at the bottom for the space of twenty yards or so was subjected to a sieve, with the result that in half an hour the ring was discovered.

Opposite the church of West Hoathly stands a fine old stone mansion, which once upon a time was the seat of a family named Feldwicke. In a lumber room here I saw a beautifully carved overmantel, which, alas! was going to be removed to some other mansion in better circumstances. Now, if it was to find a home in another *old* mansion in the neighbourhood, one could not grumble much, but to despoil a house like this (a house that is not going to be demolished), that its interior decorations may be removed into some jerry-built villa in suburban London, in my humble opinion is a positive sin. But one hears of so many cases of this

kind that to be sentimental over such vandalism would soon become chronic.

The Elizabethan mansion, Wakehurst, is about three miles from West Hoathly—a perfect house of its period, and what is more uncommon, an interior to correspond, including a magnificent oak staircase of excellent design. Another good house of about the same date is Gravetye, romantically situated on high ground, surrounded by woods, and literally enveloped in roses. On the upper terrace the garden is one mass of this queen of flowers, of all conceivable tints and shades, with a sundial in the midst, and narrow paved walks between the beds. One fault I have to find with Gravetye: plate-glass windows have been inserted throughout, and these, of course, are quite out of character with everything else. Down in a hollow, about half a mile distant from the mansion, is The Moat, a pretty little timber house, with stone mullioned windows and a compact little hall with wide, open fireplace and ingle nook; but its situation is too desolate for any other than a hermit. The village of West Hoathly is not very far away, but I pity the traveller who takes the short cut by the meadows and gets benighted, for the guiding spire of the

WAKEHURST.

OLD HOUSE, WEST HOATHLY.

church, which may be seen for miles around in the opposite direction, is entirely obliterated by the woods. In such a predicament, one can see the utility of the evening bell, which was, perhaps which is still, rung at Cowden Church, not many miles off, for the guidance of lost pedestrians.

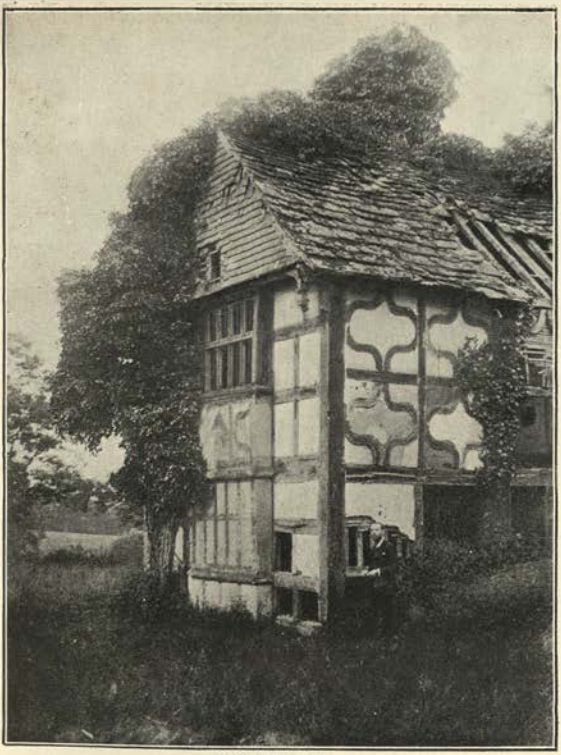
Cuckfield Place—the Rookwood Hall of Ainsworth's gruesome romance—like Wakehurst, has a most interesting interior. It is full of oak-panelled rooms, with elaborately carved mantelpieces and ornamental moulded ceilings, and a ghostly looking wide oak staircase. In the rook-haunted avenue stands the famous tree, which drops one of its branches across the gravel walk beneath whenever a member of the family is going to die.

In the grounds of an old hall in Cheshire I remember seeing a sombre-looking lake, which has the weird faculty of presaging death by sending to its surface a certain ghastly substance from its weedy bed, resembling the body of a drowned man.

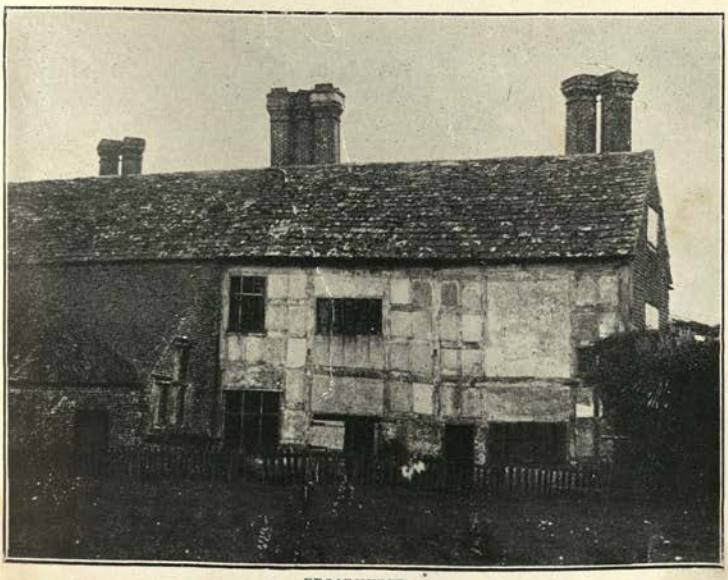
I think if I possessed such a cheerful accompaniment to an ancestral hall I should not feel much compunction in pocketing the family pride in such things, and having this spectral lake filled up. By so doing I know I should put myself upon an equal

footing with the Yankee goth, who went down on his hands and kness, so Scott tells, to eliminate the stain of Rizzio's blood at Holyrood Palace. But who *could* live happily near such a lake as that? Nowadays all such things have their market value when an estate is put up for sale. A really well-authenticated ghost fetches a big price. Only ten years since, was not the unhappy wraith of Amy Robsart a great feature at the sale of the site of Cumnor Hall? The purchaser, never having been to the spot, was under the impression that he was buying Anthony Foster's dreary mansion just as it is described in *Kenilworth*—moreover, with the ghost of "Madam Dudley" (as she is locally termed) thrown in for the money. A lawsuit was the result, when the plaintiff discovered that the restless shade of Queen Elizabeth's beautiful rival had been unsuccessfully "laid" in a pond, and this pond and some adjoining land had been knocked down to him for some two thousand pounds.

In the vicinity of Lindfield, to the east of Cuckfield, are the houses of Broadhurst and East Mascalls. The former is a timber-crossed structure with good chimneys, and has a queer contrivance on the first landing of the staircase—a kind of portcullis or



EAST MASCALLS.



BROADHURST.

drawbridge, which secures the upper stories of the house from burglarious intrusion. I have only met with a similar arrangement once before, at an old house at Green Street Green, near Dartford; but I expect the idea was not an uncommon one in the good old days, when a country gentleman was liable to have his throat cut upon the slightest provocation of his neighbours.

The ruinous Elizabethan mansion of East Mascalls (once the seat of the Norton family), in the same neighbourhood, is only a skeleton of what it was some ten years ago. Unfortunately, it is now much too far gone for restoration, but had it been taken in hand at the time I speak of, it could have been saved and turned into a good residence, as has been done with the old manor house of Ockwells (of which I shall speak presently) and many other dilapidated halls. That most beautiful ruinous house, Kirby, in Northamptonshire, I believe even now could be made habitable, but that also has suffered considerably during the past ten years or so, and, like East Mascalls, will soon be beyond patching up. I know there are many representatives of ancient families who do not take the slightest interest or pride either in their ancestral homes or in the

history of their long lineage; but, on the other hand, how sad it must be to those who love the study of the past and cherish the smallest memento of their ancestors to see the old seat, where generation after generation lived and died, go to rack and ruin without the means to hold out a helping hand.

For a good example of admirable restoration one has not to go far, for at Lindfield, "Old Place" has been treated with such taste and skill that it is impossible to detect where the old part ends and the new part commences, for it has been greatly enlarged, and, as in the instance of the old building at Langley of which I have spoken, the road has been enclosed and diverted in such a way that any one who visited the place a few years ago would become bewildered. On the other hand, Oat Hall at Wivelsfield, farther to the south, a most picturesque timber house, has been entirely destroyed by injudicious restoration, and to all intents and purposes is no better than a modern antique.

EAST MASCALLS.

CHAPTER VIII

ONCE bound for Hurstpierpoint, of college fame, and being directed to get out of the train at Hassocks station and take the bus, I carried out these instructions to the letter; but presently, after a long drive, found myself, instead of at Hurst, at Ditchling, some miles away to the east of it. It appears there were two buses, two entrances to the station, and two trains due at the same time. I had, however, no reason to complain, for had not this accident happened, the probability is I should never have seen Ditchling and its curious old houses. There is one in particular, near the church, a charming medley of Tudor stone, brick, and timber construction, quite unique, I should say. On Ditchling Common, now surmounted by a vane, stands a remnant of the gibbet, upon which the bones of many a highwayman have rattled in the breeze. Hurstpierpoint, of course, being a fashionable resort, has been shorn of most of its original buildings to

make place for handsome modern residences, but the lover of things ancient has still Danny to fall back upon as a type of a stately old English mansion.

Beyond Hurst we come to pretty little Albourn,

where are two of those timber-crossed cottages with herring-bone brickwork and the great stone slab lichen-grown roofing that one meets with in this part of Sussex. At Albourn Place, a much-restored house, one of the Royalist Juxon family was sought for in vain by the Cromwellian soldiers. Whether they discovered the unoccupied "priest's hole" that was

found here some few years ago, I cannot say, but tradition asserts they did not recognise the object of their search, who, disguised as a labourer, was at work in the adjacent church.

Bearing to the south-east from Albourn, we pass

through Edburton to Beeding and Bramber, which villages are separated by a narrow strip of river and joined by an equally narrow bridge, close by which some tumble-down red roofs form a pleasing background. The principal inn at Beeding looks as cosy and inviting as its neighbour at Bramber looks the

reverse; but I simply go by external appearances, for I entered neither. I can only say, if I had my choice, the modest antiquity of the one would have far greater attractions than the obtrusive modern additions of the other. Such incongruous erections, planted in the heart of a little hamlet of rustic cottages, always seem to throw everything into discord, in the same way that, when one of the prim and sombre dwellings of an old-fashioned London square is pulled down, the gap is occasionally filled up with a glaring monstrosity in red brick and terra-cotta, which would look all very well isolated, but there is entirely out of place.

At the little seaside resort, Charmouth, in the midst of the predominating white-washed cottages in the lower part of the street, of late there has sprung up a mushroom growth of colossal height in staring red—the sort of erection that would look all very well at Brighton, or in the Finchley Road, or anywhere but here. Whether Charmouth will try to live up to it, and in time pull down its white-washed cottages and erect some red giants, remains to be seen. In that case, of course, the little inn where the fugitive Charles II. slept[1]—or, rather, I should

[1] *Vide The Flight of the King.*

say, was very wakeful, waiting for the boat that had been engaged to carry him over to France—would be wiped off the face of the earth. So let us hope the good Charmouthites will think twice before they clear space for "desirable villas."

Talking of Charles at Charmouth, reminds me that it was near Bramber Bridge that he had to ride through a body of Parliamentary soldiers who had been stationed in the town the day before. This little episode certainly gives a historical interest to the place, and I should be glad to see a tablet put up commemorating the event.

The quaint old village—it can hardly be called a town—of Steyning, to the west of Bramber, contains many old buildings, the rectory and Brotherhood Hall being the most interesting. Still farther west, and we come to the tiny secluded village of Wiston. I once found very snug quarters for a week's holiday at the Abbot's Farm, a queer, rambling old place, where one can take things lazily after the worries of London life. It is astonishing the amount of work some of these farmers' wives get through in the day—a long day, indeed, from 4 a.m. to 12 p.m. Besides the laborious routine of the ordinary farm and dairy labour, the good lady here occasionally had

to cater for a family of twelve, who came down for the summer holidays, besides doing occasional outside needlework.

Wiston makes a very good centre for exploring, or "kernoozing," as some antiquarians call it. The great feature of the place itself is, of course, Wiston House, an Elizabethan mansion much spoiled by the insertion of plate-glass windows and other "improvements," mainly in the interior of the building. Its great hall is a noble apartment, which has lost much of its original character by injudicious restoration. One of the most elaborately carved stone fireplaces I have ever seen is now placed on the outside of the house, against a gable facing the garden.

In some respects, the exterior of Parham Hall (a few miles to the west) is similar to Wiston, but the entrance porch to the latter is far more picturesque. The interior of Parham, however, surpasses Wiston in regard to its oak carvings, furniture, portraits, and armour—the last-named collection, indeed, is world-famed. The great hall, with a very fine screen, immortalises a visit from Good Queen Bess by her Royal arms and quarterings in stucco upon the roof, and a mural escutcheon bearing her favourite motto, "*Semper eadem.*" Not

the least remarkable feature of this mansion is its long gallery, close upon 160 feet in length. Here beneath the flooring of one of the bays of a window is a dismal hiding-hole, constructed in the days of religious persecution. In many respects the long gallery resembles that at Bramshill, a more magnificent pile built about the same time by an ancestor of the present Lord Zouche of Parham; but I shall speak of this house when I go into the adjoining county of Hampshire.

The genial steward, a splendidly built fellow, evidently took great pride in the old hall and park, especially the latter, where the great primæval oaks are unrivalled. There is another Parham Hall in Suffolk, a moated house, which often is confused with the Sussex mansion.

The still more magnificent treasure-house of Petworth, standing in its great park of at least fourteen miles round, is some distance away to the north-west. In contrast to the superb pictures and oak carvings here, is the Georgian classic exterior, of which perhaps the less said the better. Petworth is one of those show-houses where you try to keep pace with the housekeeper and absorb all the miscellaneous genealogical information she unwinds, like the famous handle pedigree at Hatfield.

There are two species of housekeeper—viz., those who really understand the complications of the family tree, having made a hobby of it since they became part and parcel of their surroundings; and, secondly, those who know nothing beyond a few set phrases learned off parrot style. Should you get courage and the time to interrogate, you will be singled out from the flock of sightseers either as a personal friend or as a deadly enemy; but in either case, you will be worsted: for if you seek for extra information from the former class of housekeeper, she will involve you in such a complication of the marriages of past generations—of the intricate relationships between the fifth earl and the dowager countess, and of the rightful and wrongful claims to the estate of the step-children of the third wife of the sixth earl, and so forth, that you will be glad to escape into the fresh air to collect the tangled thread of your thoughts. Whereas, on the other hand, if you venture to cross-question the second class of housekeeper, she will respond in such a way that the rest of the party will look upon you as one who wants too much for his money.

Who has not noticed in these show-house parties that there is always somebody who entirely ignores

what the housekeeper has to say, and persistently lags behind, and who has to be waited for as one enters each separate apartment, ere that lady can commence her oration; noticed also the minute details that some of the ladies of the party are anxious to extract relative to the social functions of the living representatives of the house; noticed the bated breath with which "his lordship" or "her grace" or "the Lady Susan" are spoken about, and finally noticed how, among the jingling of florins at parting, some of the party slide off and softly replace their coins in their pockets?

To see all the pictures at Petworth properly would take at least half a dozen visits. What a boon it would be were it possible (which of course it would not be) to take one's leisure here, as one may at the unrivalled Wallace Collection.

Of the numerous Vandycks, an impression is left on my memory of one particularly fine full-length of Queen Henrietta Maria in a blue dress and a great black hat; certainly one of the most pleasing portraits I have ever seen of this rather vindictive queen. The elaborate oak carvings by Gibbons, which surround all the portraits in this particular room, are as fine as, if not finer than, those of Chatsworth. The light colour of the unvarnished

oak also adds materially to the colouring of the paintings quite as much as the dark setting of cedar-wood shows out the Vandycks at Warwick Castle.

Petworth town is very rich in curious bits of architecture. The almshouse, of Queen Anne date, is a curious, lofty brick building, containing a pretty little staircase.

As is well known, the country between Haslemere, Midhurst, and Petworth presents some of the most beautiful scenery in the South of England. Between the latter two are many old houses, including the famous ruins and walks of Cowdray. The road also between Midhurst and Petersfield runs through some delightful scenery, and that to the south of the railway running parallel with it is even more attractive. Of the villages here I have the most pleasant recollection of Harting, and of the old seat of the Tankervilles, Up Park, the house that was built by Ford, Lord Grey, that reckless companion of the weak, handsome, ill-fated Duke of Monmouth. A certain sad and romantic interest clings to Up Park, for here the profligate Grey abducted his sister-in-law from her father's house of the Durdans, near Epsom, carrying her afterwards into Holland, where he joined his luckless friend in the ill-advised insurrection

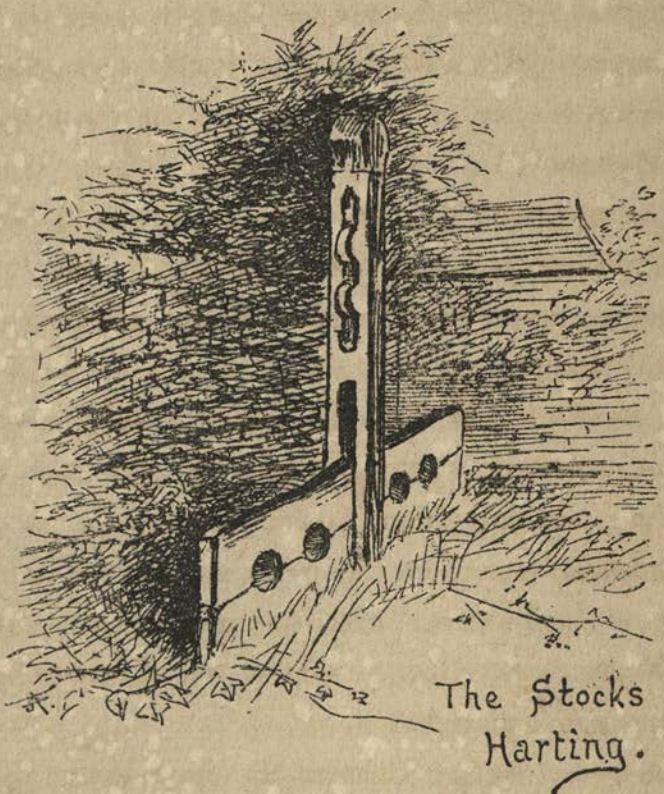
which cost the latter his head.[1] What became of Lady Henrietta Berkeley nobody knows. There is no record of her interment at Cranford, the burial-place of the Berkeley family, or here.

I was trying to get a peep at the old house when a clergyman, suddenly emerging from an entrance into the park, kindly offered his services. I had corresponded with this gentlemen, and, seeing my interest in the place, he asked whether we had not exchanged letters, with the result that I was invited to put up that night at the vicarage. This courtesy I gladly accepted, and was taken by my kind host first to see the mansion, and afterwards, by a gradual descent down to the village, through the most romantic winding road in the heart of a forest of beech-trees, and I shall never forget the beautiful effect of the golden sunset between the tracery of the fairy canopy of green. My hospitable friend had a kind word for every one, and I should imagine had a very practical way of doing good.

Being a bachelor, his house was kept as a sort of open establishment for his parishioners. In the pretty grounds they came to amuse themselves or to be instructed—a contingent of school youngsters came

[1] *Vide King Monmouth.*

to tea once a week, and the specially favoured to breakfast with their generous pastor. He gave up his own pretty bedroom, as a matter of course, to a stranger—a bedroom with a sunny outlook over the



The Stocks
Harting.

meadows, so bright and so cheerful that to awake in it in the morning was to rejoice and feel as light-hearted as the lark outside carrying his song up to the sky. Everything seemed to heighten the universal harmony of the scene, from the sleepy

"caw" of the passing rook to the distant tinkle of the sheep bell.

It was Sunday morning, and I had to journey on to Chichester. My host left me making preparations for departure; but no sooner had he gone in the direction of his church than I noticed a strange commotion up in one of the apple-trees in the orchard, a novel sight to me—viz., a swarm of bees. I have heard somewhere that it is an old custom in Sussex before taking possession of a swarm to play them a kind of impromptu tattoo on the warming-pan. Why, I cannot say—at any rate, as far as I am aware, this was not the mode of procedure here. I did not, however, wait to witness the capture.

The main attraction Chichester way lay in the direction of Racton, to the west, and close upon the border of Hampshire. Here in the church are some good tombs to the Gounter family, but their old house has long since disappeared.

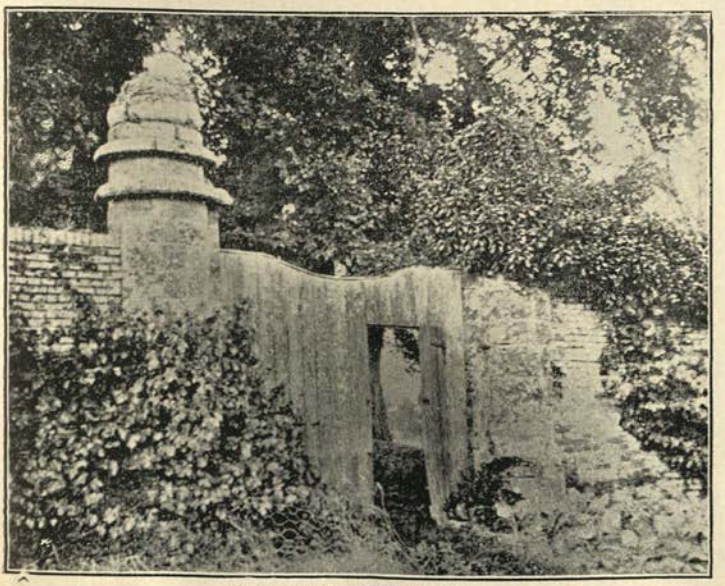
Nine years before Charles II. was restored to his throne, Colonel Gounter, of Racton, was one of the chief agents in getting the King safely out of the country, after he had been wandering about for weeks disguised, enduring terrible hardships. The loyal colonel has left behind him a record of the im-

portant part he played in the drama—how Lord Wilmot (the father of the witty and debauched poet) came to his house one night; how the colonel's wife was mystified, and how, like most women, she succeeded in worming out the secret; how also, after a hundred strange incidents, he stood on the beach near Shoreham watching Captain Tattersall's little craft, with its precious cargo, growing smaller and smaller as it sailed merrily towards the coast of France.[1]

Lordington House at Racton has not shared the fate of its neighbour, the home of the Gounters. It is a plain-looking Stuart house, but its interior contains some good panelled rooms and a wonderfully fine oak staircase with great monsters supporting shields upon the various landings. The house was occupied by cottagers, and the rooms were most of them disused and in a terrible state of dust and decay. At the bottom of a weed-grown garden were the imposing piers of an entrance gate—picturesque, but, like the rest, fast crumbling into ruin. A house like this, of course, must have its ghost. The old elm avenue is said to be haunted by the spectral form of a woman with a band of red around her throat, supposed to be the aged Countess of Salisbury.

[1] *Vide The Flight of the King.*

PORCH HOUSE, CHIDDINGSTONE.



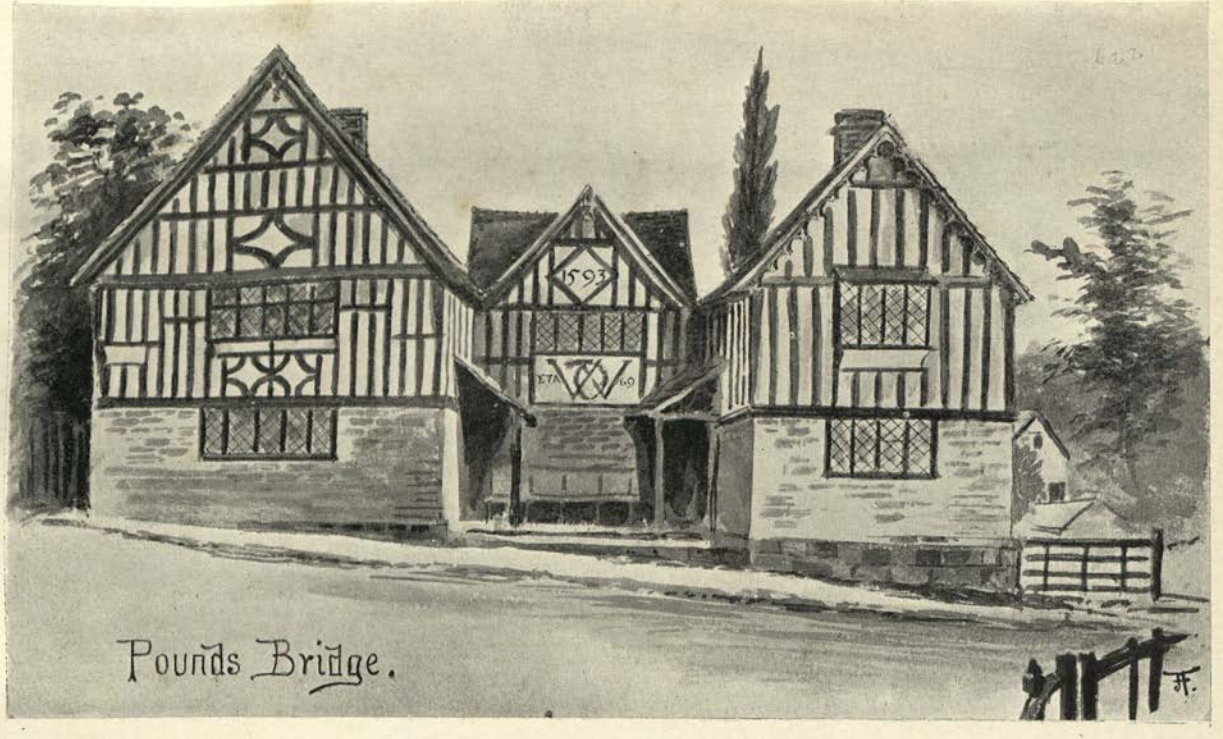
GATEWAY, LORDINGTON HOUSE.

CHAPTER IX

BEFORE going into Hampshire, let us return to East Grinstead and strike northwards into the south-east corner of beautiful Surrey. At this junction of the three counties—Sussex, Surrey, and Kent—each may be seen at its best, more especially as regards picturesque old houses. It would be difficult to find a stretch of country of more general interest to the antiquary than that between Bidborough and Westerham, in Kent, and Horley, in Surrey. This will include some of the most perfect specimens of "half-timber" in the South of England—viz., houses near Bidborough and Penshurst churches, —at Chiddingstone, and a remarkable specimen at Pound's Bridge, which is now a roadside inn, but once upon a time was a parsonage. Upon the front are the initials of its original owner and the date 1593. The village street of Chiddingstone stands unrivalled as a picture. Such a complete row of ancient houses it would be difficult to find

anywhere else in England. Of recent years it has been a favourite resort of artists, whose easels in the summer time are posed in all directions. At the back of the combination village inn and butcher's shop is the "chiding stone," but I cannot recall its history.

At the historic houses of Penshurst and Hever, close by, I think I got my earliest impressions of an ancient mansion. Upon a recent visit to the former I was struck by the comparatively small size of its state apartments with what I had imagined them to be. The youthful eye is certainly prone to magnify. The old gallery—where stands that queer old red and gold spinnet, and where hangs that eccentric picture of Elizabeth and her favourite, Leicester, cutting very high capers—looked strangely stunted. I had imagined it to be full three times its length. These fine old rooms are rich in portraits of the sad-faced Sidneys, and if we would add to their realism, we may find in the private apartments innumerable locks of hair—of Sir Philip, of the beautiful "Sacharissa," of Algernon and his brother, the "handsome Sidney," who, according to De Gramont's *Memoirs*, played havoc with the hearts of the fair and frail at the Court of the



Pounds Bridge.

Merry Monarch. By no means the least attraction at Penshurst are the old gardens, with their trim yew hedges, fishponds, fountains, and sundials, and the terrace steps leading to "Sacharissa's Walk," an avenue of venerable limes. Here the handsome Dorothy Sidney was wont to walk, as was the custom of Dorothy Vernon on the romantic terrace of Haddon, though, alas! the poet-admirer of the former got but little encouragement, whereas the other love story terminated happily, if I remember aright.

Hever, I understand, has been restored of late. It may be all that one could wish now, but the old moated castle, or, rather, fortified manor house, when I was there was in the picturesque condition of Haddon—time-worn and moss and lichen coloured. So little disturbed was (and I hope still is) the ancient character of the little interior quadrangle, that one could almost imagine the stalwart figure of square-shouldered Henry advancing beneath the portcullis, and the beautiful Anne Boleyn crossing the courtyard to welcome her Royal lover.

Nearer to Edenbridge and Lingfield are the manor houses of Crittenden, Puttenden, and Crowhurst. The first of these contains a very compact little panelled hall, with a fixed settle running round the

room and a good carved oak chimney-piece. At the moated house of Crowhurst, Henry VIII. is traditionally said to have planted a yew hedge upon one of his occasional visits *en route* for Hever. Some of the rooms here are lined round with horizontal beams of oak, and there are fine oak ceilings with fluted girders and joists. The Hall has been divided, but the original timber roof is intact. To make a short cut from Lingfield to Puttenden, I was sent across the fields and told to go straight ahead. I did so, but soon found further progress impeded by a high thorn hedge, but, after minute scrutiny, I discovered a stile in the corner of the meadow. Once more I went straight ahead, and this time was stopped by a river. When I had wandered along its banks for about a mile looking for a crossing, and in desperation was making preparations for wading, I noticed the little foot-bridge in the distance, and, crossing this, I soon found myself at Puttenden. It may be very easy to go "straight ahead" *when you know the way*. But some country folk are as lavish with their minute directions as others are brief. You are told to go by Mr. Giles's farm, and round by Mr. Snooks's paddock, and keep the spinney to the left, and you will find a gate, etc. You

HEVER CASTLE.

CRITTENDEN.

follow these instructions, as far as you are able, to the letter, and you discover *three* gates. Then, if a large tree, or a gap in the trees, has been pointed out as a landmark, can one ever keep that landmark in sight in the windings and turnings you have to take to get to it? Perhaps those who have the bump of locality well defined are more successful than myself in such matters.

The old manor house of Puttenden had recently fallen into good hands. Its possessor was restoring it in admirable taste; not only was he superintending the work, but he was himself busily engaged in the carpentering department. I wish every old house had the good fortune to fall into such sympathetic hands. The hall is a noble apartment, with a roof of prodigious oak beams, and one of the largest and finest Tudor chimney-pieces to be found for miles around, bearing the arms of the former possessors.

Another fine old timber manor house is Blockfield, a few miles to the south of Puttenden, which externally is more picturesque than any of the foregoing. It is moated, and the architecture points to the latter part of the fifteenth century. The plaster beneath the eaves of the roof is coved, like that at the old house at Harrietsham, and there

remains on one side of the entrance door a curious oak buttress, which was evidently balanced by a companion on the opposite side. There is herring-bone brickwork between the timber beams, and on one side of the house is the original (but now blocked up) fifteenth-century bay window. The doorways, back and front, are large in comparison to the house, and presumably were added in the seventeenth century. The farmer in occupation was on the eve of leaving, both on account of the bad times generally and the isolated position of the house, for it stands a long way off the high road, but in comparison to The Moat at Gravetye I think I should prefer premature burial here of the two.

There is another old house close to Lingfield, which, as I remember it some years ago, before the railway got there, was as perfect a little Jacobean stone-gabled manor house as one could wish to see; but now in place of the diamond-paned casements are those terrible plate-glass windows, and a charming entrance gate has been taken out of the garden wall and now forms the entrance door to the house. This gateway may be seen in its original position in the pathetic picture by Seymour Lucas, R.A.—"For the King and the Cause"—a wounded

BLOCKFIELD.

Blockfield.

cavalier brought upon a litter for succour to some mansion in the vicinity of Edgehill—one of those graphic pictures which at a glance tells its own story.

The old Guest Hall near Lingfield Church has recently been carefully restored, and the original doorways and windows opened out. There are many other old houses here, but since the railway has arrived the village is, alas! assuming a suburban appearance, though the old stone lock-up and an older obelisk adjoining it, with a still older tree beside it, form a group that is quite out of keeping with a modernised village.

Among the monuments in the church is the recumbent effigy of the knight Sir Reginald of Sterburgh, which gives one a good idea of the costumes and armour of the fourteenth century. The brasses are also fine, and there are stalls with carved miserere seats, a chained Bible, and an old helmet surmounted by a crest of a bird.

Another fine old stone Tudor house with a good interior is Smallfield Place, near the village of Horne, to the west of Lingfield.

Farther south-west, below Ockley and near the Sussex border, are Osbrook, Bonnets, and King's Farms

—three remarkably picturesque old farmsteads, with gable ends, clustered chimney-stacks, oriel windows, overhanging stories, cosy porches—in fact, everything that is in keeping. I have seen these delightful old buildings covered with a mantle of snow and with cheery lights flickering in the old diamond-paned windows; poetic pictures such as Read used to depict in the old Christmas numbers of the *Illustrated London News*. What a pity, by the way, these have never been reproduced collectively in book form or in separate plates! There is a blending of the real and the ideal which should appeal to many.

The description of Baynards Hall in one of Hone's books—the *Year Book*, I think—surely must have sent many lovers of picturesque old houses in quest of it. I for one went down to Rudgwick, and as far as beautiful country went, I was quite content, but alas! the disappointment in Baynards! It had been restored and "improved" at a time when "restoration" and "improvement" meant ruin.

The neighbourhood of Godalming and Guildford abounds in ornamental timber houses such as one sees in Cheshire and Shropshire. In the manor houses of Bramley and Great Tangley is that circular timber pattern of ornamentation which has

Great Tangley.

so pleasing an effect. In the by-lanes hereabouts are several such. The stately mansions of Loseley and Sutton Place are, of course, two of the most interesting buildings in the county. The exterior of Loseley fell as short of my expectations as that of Sutton exceeded them. The rich colour and ornamentation of the terra-cotta front of Sutton is superb. In my opinion it is the slate roof of Loseley which spoils it. With those large slabs of stone so common in the county the effect would be quite different. The drawing-room, with its elaborately carved Elizabethan fireplace, pendent ceiling, and stained glass, is a gorgeous apartment. If I remember aright, there is a drawing of it in Nash's *Mansions*. Among the portraits of the More and Molineux families are some of historical interest, that of Anne Boleyn, for instance, which may originally have come from her old home at Hever. In the old gardens is a long raised terrace with an old-fashioned flower-bed running its entire length, and one of those little pavilions or music-houses at the end, where perchance many soft nothings have been pleaded by faithful and faithless swains.

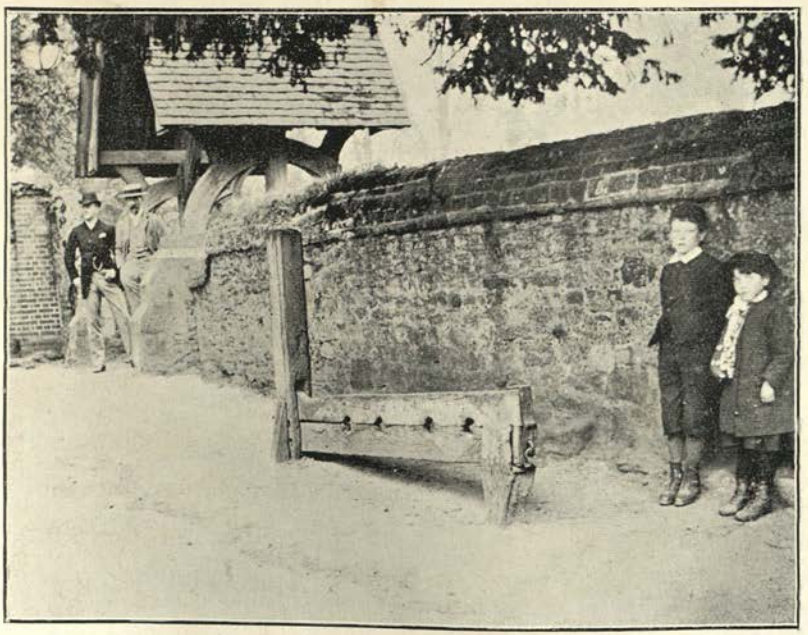
Alfold, Dunsfold, and Chiddingfold, far away

from the railway to the south of Godalming, and near the border of Sussex, are quite old-world villages, and they abound in half-timber and Sussex-tiled cottages. The "Crown Inn" at the last may be specified as a good example. The stocks and whipping-post at Alfold are similar to those at White Waltham, in Berkshire, of which I give an illustration later on. We are here in a country of *folds*, as we were among the *dens* in Kent. There is Paddingfold, Polingfold, Frithfold, Upfold, and all other kinds of "folds." Burningfold, like Bramley and Tangley, has the pretty circular timber ornamentation in its gable ends.

As regards Hampshire, my impressions are very limited, for I am ashamed to own I am a stranger to its principal beauty—the New Forest. My remarks must, therefore, be confined to a few places between Eversley in the north-east, Winchester, and Emsworth in the south-east.

The first mentioned of these boundary points, so famous for its Charles Kingsley associations, is the most beautifully situated old village, but the raptures of my first impression were sadly damped as, after a long cycle run from the north of London, I was unable to get a bed there as I had wished, and as I

OLD HOUSE, ALFOLD



SHALFORD STOCKS, NEAR GUILDFORD.

was equally unfortunate at the village of Bramdean on the night following, I naturally came to the conclusion that if one wants to get a night's lodging in Hampshire, elsewhere than in the village lock-up, it would be as well not to fix beforehand upon any definite spot, and in any case previously to write and charter a bed. Where I did eventually succeed in finding a resting-place, at the nearest point to Eversley, was at a fashionable hotel near the Wellington College at Sandhurst, situated in a lovely spot and literally buried in rhododendrons. As a rule, I avoid these grand establishments, but I must admit I had *no* reason to regret putting up in this one—indeed, I should say it would be an ideal place to spend a holiday, enjoying the combination of lovely country and luxurious living.

My introduction to Emsworth was on the evening of a hot July day—one of those glorious evenings about half an hour before the sun sinks behind the horizon, when everything is tinged with the soft red light. The most commonplace bit of road is a picture at such a time, and I recollect I often halted to enjoy the colour of things which under ordinary circumstances would have no attraction whatever. An ordinary tarred five-barred gate leading

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into a hayfield with a high thorn hedge by it, and a prodigious growth of nettles, does not sound as if it could be beautiful under any aspect, still, I remember being struck by the wonderful harmony of colours of this combination. The black gates under the influence of the setting sun had the rich colouring of the bloom on a damson, the dusty sandy road had the delicate pink of a sea-shell, the young shoots of the thorn hedge were so many spikes of gold relieved by the nettles, which were now purple. Above all, a huge poppy shone a flame of scarlet against a distant hill of deep blue. Possibly this attempt at description may read ridiculous, but I remember trying to analyse the colours upon the spot so as account for the harmonious results. What are the pleasures of the whole day in a long summer's ride compared with the last half-hour before the sun dips down?

Had I been more sensible and practical, I should not thus have wasted my time, but sought a resting-place for the night, for, after all, it is unreasonable to suppose that any good housewife would feel inclined to prepare an extra bed when the majority of country folk are thinking of turning in. One most inviting-looking old hostelry, all gable ends and cosy corners,

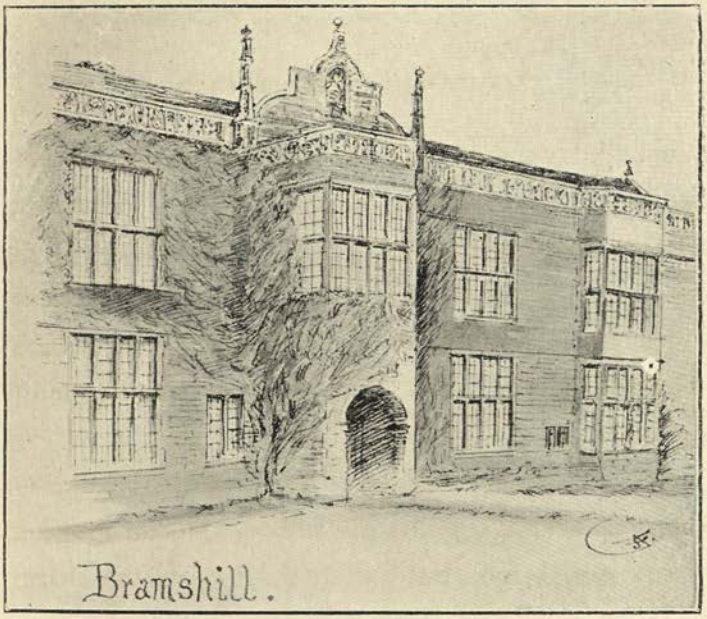
had, alas! abandoned itself to a local feast of some sort, and was up to the ears—or chimneys, rather—with noisy revellers, who oozed out of every window from roof to cellar. The brass band, of course, was there in full force, and on the village green were cokernut shies, shooting galleries, round-abouts which played feverish waltzes by steam, and many another village fair amusement. I did not wait long enough to notice whether they ran to "a fat woman" or "a living skeleton," nor did I seek for lodgings, but, hastening to another inn at an adjoining hamlet, asked if I could be accommodated there. The landlord seemed willing enough, but his buxom spouse scoffed at the idea. "You'll get a bed at the Wellington Hotel," said she, "and you'll have *to pay* for it." Well, that was only natural. "People who expect to get a bed this time o' night," she continued, "can't get one *for nothing*." That was also true enough, but I question if they could even if they applied for one in the middle of the day.

Many pilgrims, of course, go to Eversley for its Kingsley associations, and much has been written about that great writer's home and country pursuits. My object in coming here was less to worship at that shrine than to see the wonders of grand old

Bramshill House; so next morning I returned to Eversley Common, and, taking a road through a forest of magnificent Scotch firs—the finest in England, or Scotland either for that matter—I soon came to the moss-grown garden wall, with a little recess for seats, and Jacobean ornaments aloft, the most delightful of resting-places.

There is something about the exterior of Bramshill which surpasses almost any other old mansion I have ever seen, but whether the greater charm lies in its colour or picturesque architecture, I cannot say. Along the eastern side, facing the smoothest of bowling greens, is a raised terrace with stone balustrade and alcoves at either end, something in the style of that at Ham House, near Petersham. Each wing, courtyard, or quadrangle has some peculiarity about a gable, bay window, or porch, and of these the west front is the most remarkable —a curious combination of Jacobean, Grecian, and Gothic ornamentation.

The interior of the mansion is quite in keeping with its exterior. The old rooms have, many of them, huge black marble chimney-pieces running up to the ceilings, carved oak wainscoting, tapestry, and portraits of the Copes for generations past; there



STOCKS, ODIHAM.

is also an old chapel, and a long gallery running the entire length of the building. The present owner, Sir Anthony Cope, like his forefathers, delights in his ancestral home, and will allow no restorations but such as are absolutely necessary, and these are executed with the tenderest care, so it is impossible to detect where the old work has been renovated. The general appearance of the interior of Bramshill reminds one of that most perfect of old halls, Hardwick, in Derbyshire. The exterior of the latter may, perhaps, be more imposing, but in regard to colour there is no comparison, for a house of mellowed red brick will always compare favourably against one of stone.

Odiham, to the south, and Old Basing, to the south-east of Eversley, are both picturesque. By way of extensive heaths of purple heather and velvety turf, you strike into the road which runs between Bagshot and Basingstoke, and take another road running at right angles to the south. The rectory house of Odiham is a pretty old house, and, I am informed by the son of a late rector, contains a ghost, which his mother has frequently seen! Unfortunately, I was somewhat tied for time here, and had to content myself with a passing glance at the

old houses and at the parish stocks, which stand intact. I believe as recently as 1872 a man was placed in the stocks at Newbury, in Berkshire, for drunkenness, although the punishment had fallen into disuse some forty years before.

Anybody travelling down the South-Western line must have noticed how pretty Old Basing looks from the railway, and I have known many people who, from this appetising glimpse, have got out at Basingstoke to explore the village. The interest, of course, is centred in the scanty remains of the old castle, or "house," so gallantly defended by the Royalist Marquis of Winchester against the Parliamentary forces in 1643 and 1644. The starving garrison received temporary relief from Colonel Gage, who made a desperate and successful sally to take in provisions. With the zeal of a true Cavalier, the old Marquis swore he would hold out even if his house was the last to stand for the King; but Cromwell at length arrived in person, and his invincible Ironsides were not long before they carried the day, with booty, it is said, to the value of £200,000, leaving behind only a smouldering mass of ruins. Among the later Paulets interred at Basing was the beautiful Countess of Bolton, the illegitimate daughter

of the handsome Duke of Monmouth, to whom she bore a striking resemblance.

From Old Basing I went to Winchester, of all the cathedral cities one of the most picturesque; but I was somewhat disappointed in the old buildings around the close, after those of Salisbury. Apart from the Cathedral and the famous hospital of St. Cross, I think I was best pleased with a quaint line of ancient houses along the side of the river. When I revisited Winchester a few months later, I was sadly disappointed to find that one of these, with delicate carved oak tracery of the fifteenth century, had been demolished.

Winchester was a favourite resort of the Court of Charles II., where, had that monarch lived longer, he would have completed a Royal palace. His favourites, Gwyn and Portsmouth, judging by contemporary gossip, very properly were housed outside the precincts. When at Winchester the King was a frequent visitor to Avington, an old mansion some miles to the north-east of the city—a classic-looking structure, the oldest part of which is now centred in and around the stables. The old banqueting-hall, that used to resound with the revelries of the Merry Monarch and the select (?) few whom he chose for

his companions, was afterwards converted into a greenhouse or conservatory, but now has entirely disappeared. The King's hostess was the abandoned Countess of Shrewsbury, the notorious woman who, according to Horace Walpole, disguised as a page, is said to have held Buckingham's horse while that nobleman had a duel with her husband, in which the latter was slain.[1] I remember having seen among the Peel heirlooms, dispersed a year or so ago, a very curious portrait of this lady as Minerva. The picture originally came from Avington, whence it was removed to princely Stowe, and thence to Drayton. Now, alas! it has gone for ever, I suppose to America. What a thousand pities it could not have been purchased back for its original home. Away from its associations, surely it has lost all its romantic interest, and is merely now an example of Lely's art.

Jack Talbot, the son of the victim of Buckingham's sword, also was fated to meet his death in the same way, falling in a duel with the son of his mother's Royal guest—viz., the first Duke of Grafton, Charles II.'s son by the Duchess of Portsmouth. Charles Talbot, the heir to Avington,

[1] *Vide The Memoirs of the Count de Gramont.*

dying without issue, the estate devolved upon his mother's son by a second marriage. The fate of this son was especially tragic, and, though perhaps less savouring of romance, had more heroism about it. In his vain attempts to save a favourite dog from drowning in Avington lake, the old gentleman got beyond his depth and was drowned.

I may mention that Pope's well-known allusion to the association of the Duke of Buckingham's riverside seat, Clevedon, with the Countess of Shrewsbury, must not be accepted as fact; for that house was only in course of erection at the time she married her second husband in 1680. So much for the old memories of Avington.

On my way from here to Bramdean (which lies about midway between Petersfield and Winchester), I passed through a village whose name will always be familiar in this country—viz., Tichborne. A quiet, cheerful little place it seemed to be. The unpretentious inn—the "Tichborne Arms," I think was its name—had a particularly homely aspect, and was kept by an equally homely hostess, who had many stories to recount in connection with the famous trial.

As I have said before, I wanted to put up at Bramdean, but arriving there late was not successful,

and had to go on to West Meon. Returning next morning, I visited the manor house of Woodcote, and had the honour to be conducted round the old house by its owner, the famous physician and etcher, Sir Seymour Haden. Among other things of interest he showed me a room full of his etchings, which he said were very rarely to be met with. I understand that the collection will one day or other find a home in the British Museum. Woodcote is a compact little red-brick gabled house, but does not boast any particular architectural beauty. Various alterations have, I grieve to say, swept away all signs of some curious hiding-places which were once to be seen.

Warnford and Hambledon are both very pretty villages, situated far away from any railway in a stretch of thoroughly rural England, and here must my ramblings in Hampshire end. But I forgot: Ringwood and Fordingbridge belong to the extreme west of this county. These favourite resorts of the angler impressed me mainly with the beauty of the winding river Avon. The former place I visited on account of its proximity to Moyles Court, which is associated with sad memories of the good Lady Lisle, who, for her compassion in housing two wretched fugitives from the field of Sedgemoor, was

Woodcote.

condemned by the inhuman Jeffreys to be burned at the stake. The trial of the lady is a remarkable record of the licence and brutality of the Bench at the latter part of the seventeenth century. The old house was saved some years ago from falling into ruin and oblivion: as it appears now, however, it bids fair for a long and prosperous future, notwithstanding the fact that the portrait of Jeffreys reigns supreme at the old house of his unfortunate victim.

CHAPTER X

WE will not at present go into the western counties, but will strike northwards through parts of Berkshire and Oxfordshire, keeping more or less to the course of the beautiful river Thames. Alas! the old river is fast losing its primitive character, and great fashionable hotels are rapidly taking the place of the cosy little riverside inns; ere very long I suppose the banks up as far as Oxford will present quite a suburban appearance, except where the grounds of private estates have not been cut up for building purposes.

My first impression as a boating man—or, rather, youth—was going up the river from Kingston to Maidenhead with an old and enthusiastic oarsman, an athlete with not the faintest trace of timidness or nervousness in his composition, and, therefore, a striking contrast to myself. They say friendships originate through the juxtaposition of the most opposite and contrary qualities. Perhaps that is why

he and I struck up companionship. He did the rowing in thoroughly professional style, and with a swing which would have been approved by the picked men of either university.

I had to manage the steering as best I could, and once or twice, when I had lost both my head and the rudder lines, the only way to save a collision was to shout out "Whoa!" This somewhat original style prevented many a catastrophe. But I fared far worse when my friend left me to my own resources and got out to tow the boat, unfurling the rope as he darted off at a breakneck pace over hills and housetops, so it seemed to me. The little craft, meanwhile, was travelling through the water like a torpedo-boat, and I had to steer clear through the most intricate complication of barges, houseboats, and derelicts of all shapes and sizes. How I managed to come out of the dilemma alive has always been a mystery to me. Providence must have stepped aboard and directed the steering. Every nerve and muscle was strained to keep the boat from capsizing. To "Whoa!" now was out of the question, for my friend was miles ahead beyond recall, entirely oblivious of my precarious situation. At last we got clear of the busy place, wherever

it was. I breathed once more. The towing line grew shorter and shorter. My friend again was within measurable distance, and when at last he joined me, I impressed upon him that next time any towing had to be done I should prefer "terra cotta," as the old lady remarked upon her way from Dover to Calais.

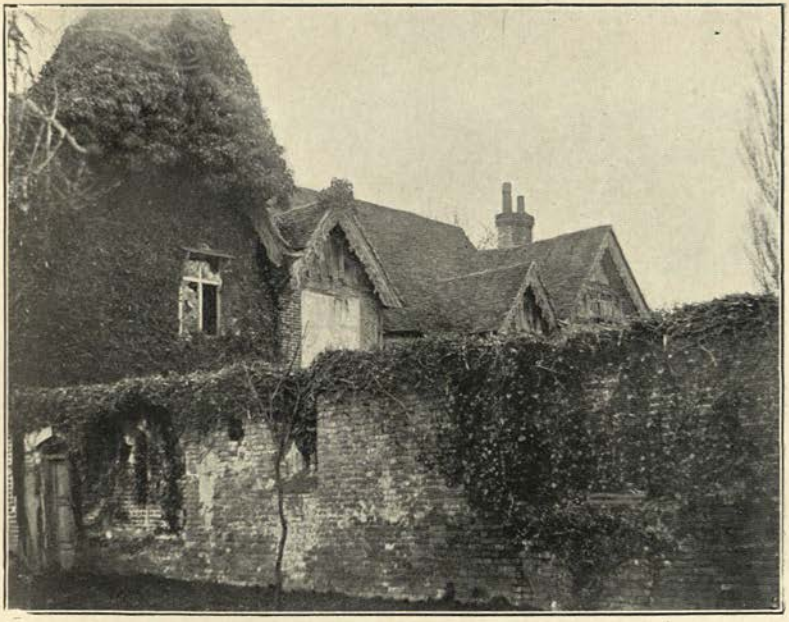
At Maidenhead my friend left me; he was bound for Oxford, while I had to get back that night to town; but, as the days were long, I had a couple of hours to spare, so I set out in search of Ockwells Manor House, of which I had seen some fascinating drawings in Nash's *Old English Mansions*. This fine old fifteenth-century house was then comparatively little known, and I had some difficulty in finding its situation, but after hunting about and making various inquiries, at length I espied some old roofs and chimneys in the midst of a clump of lofty poplar and chestnut trees. Closer to the road were great bushes of syringa, which filled the air with their sweet fragrance. I approached the old house with misgivings, for I could recognise in it none of the beautifully carved barge-boards of the drawing; but wandering round by some old barns and out-buildings, I suddenly

came upon the front, and shall never forget the impression it made upon me. Part was in deep shadow, while the upper portion was brilliantly lighted by the last rays of the setting sun, which brought out all the fantastic carvings in bold relief. Long I stood in the grass-grown courtyard, peopling the silent house with the gaily bedecked lords and ladies dead and forgotten for centuries, who once frequented the now deserted rooms and corridors. Never had I seen such a picture of sad but dignified solitude.

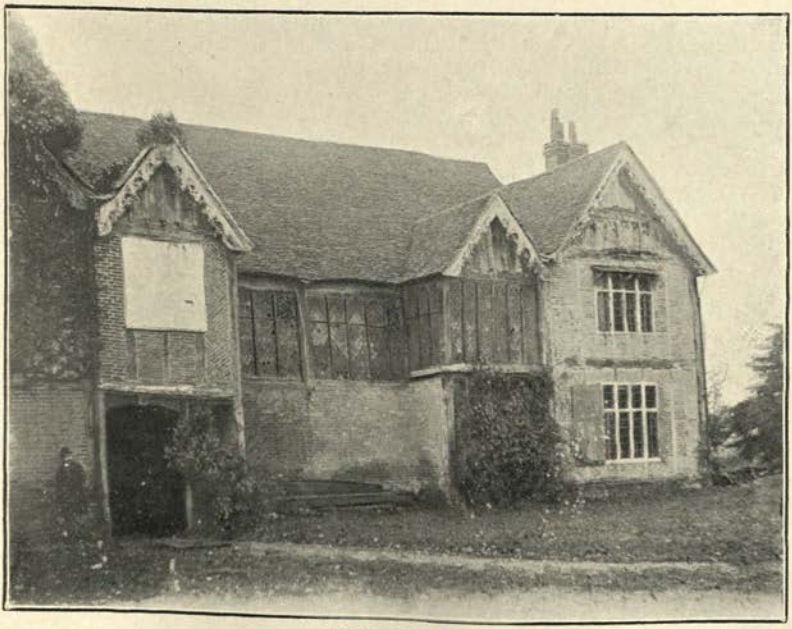
All this side of the house was unoccupied and crumbling to decay, but in a most poetic state from an artistic point of view. A delightful old carved porch, with great dragons upon the spandrils above, led by the quaintest old corridor or "entrie" to the great hall. Here dilapidation reigned supreme —dust and débris everywhere. The oak panelling, bleached with age, was crumbling off the walls. In the wide expanse of diamond-paned windows all along one side of the hall and in the great bay by the raised daïs were apertures through which heavy festoons of ivy had found their way. Upon the walls above the panelling was a strange medley of things—a great pair of Cromwellian jack-boots, a

dilapidated Elizabethan saddle of green velvet, a fragment of chain mail, a rusty sword or two, and some hoops of iron which once served as stirrups. The boots, I was informed by a farm labourer, were once the property of no less a personage than Oliver Cromwell. He was surprised here (so went the story) by a party of Royalists, and had to get off as best he could without his boots! What a subject for a historical picture — the Lord Protector decamping in his stockings! I wonder whether the Vicar of Bray of the famous song had pity upon him if he fled that way, and provided him with another pair.

One really learns some valuable bits of history travelling about the country. A friend of mine was once shown the identical inn yard where "Henry VIII. addressed the Romans," and in the same village the residence of "Queen Dowger." He suggested "Dowager," but was immediately crushed. "Dowger was the woman's name," his informant was sure. I have been shown also the house of "Guy Fawkes, the first Quaker," or if something more sensational were required, could point out where the original block may be seen upon which Queen Elizabeth was beheaded!



OCKWELLS.



OCKWELLS.

The part of Ockwells which pleased me best was a glazed corridor upon the upper landing of the staircase, which led on to the minstrels' gallery. At the time when the staircase became an important feature of a house space was found in the little interior quadrangle around which the glazed corridor runs for erecting an imposing Jacobean staircase. From an old room at the back of the screen, or minstrels' gallery, was a little opening through which the lord of the manor could keep a watch upon his retainers, if necessary; though upon occasions when the flowing bowl was conspicuous, I expect it was equally necessary for the lady of the manor to keep an eye upon her lord and master.

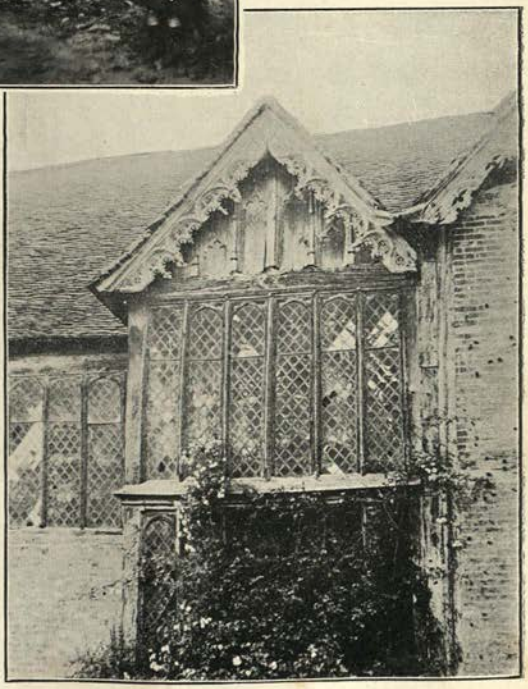
In the passage leading into the hall was the old buttery hatch, with enormous hinges and iron supports. It conjured up visions of veal pasties, roasted peacocks, soused gurnet, and the tempting viands one reads about in the romances of Harrison Ainsworth. Such visions are all very well in their way, but they are tantalising upon an empty stomach, as was the case in this instance.

Since the occasion of my first trip to Ockwells there have been many changes. The old house and some adjoining land changed hands, and rumours got

about that it was going to be pulled down—indeed, I have since heard that transactions had already been entered upon for selling the carved oak tracery in the gables and elsewhere, and that some of these were eventually going to America. Letters written to the newspapers as a rule do not attract much attention, or do much practical good, but the result of one which I wrote to the *Standard* was particularly gratifying. Other papers promptly took up the cause. Pictures of the doomed manor house appeared in the illustrated journals. This gratuitous advertisement, I suppose, suggested a financial speculation, for ere long the property again changed owners—for the better. Since then, from time to time, a small fortune has been spent in the most careful and complete restoration. As a rule I tremble at the very word, for have not hundreds of houses and churches been entirely destroyed by ignorant and unsympathetic workmen? In the case of Ockwells, however, I believe their mode of procedure has been rigidly watched from first to last.

Quite recently I accepted an invitation to compare the past with the present, and indeed there was a metamorphosis. The flat ceiling had been removed and the open timber roof revealed. All

PORCH, OCKWELLS.



OCKWELLS.

the original heraldic glass (which fortunately had been taken out years before) had been replaced to its original position in the windows of the great hall (a display of colour that it would be difficult to rival). Suits of armour and ancient weapons of all descriptions stood and hung in every direction, and carved Gothic cabinets, antique chairs and tables, fitted into their several corners as if they had stood there for a couple of centuries at least. In additional contrast also to my previous visit, a table was laid for lunch, which, amidst such environment, it is needless to state, was most acceptable. I had heard rumours that the quaint old glazed corridors had been removed, but greatly rejoiced to find them untouched, and improved tenfold by the walls being lined with ancient tapestry. "Linen-fold" oak panelling and elaborately carved mantelpieces from other old houses have found a most suitable home here, as have Elizabethan chests and bedsteads, and even a Jacobean cradle is in use for instilling the young mind from its earliest days with the love of "Kernoozable" things.

The exterior restoration has been as careful and complete as the interior—indeed, it is almost impossible to detect where the old masonry ends and where the new commences. The porch has been widened

to its original dimensions, and the carved portions of oak cleverly fitted into their original positions like the most ingenious of puzzles. The new buildings which have been added are quite in keeping with the rest, and the amount of oak lavished upon the ceilings, etc., is as extensive as in the original part of the house.

Of the once important family of Norreys who originally lived at Ockwells, there were, not many years ago, living representatives in the neighbourhood, but, as in the case of so many similar vicissitudes of ancient families, they had degenerated into common labourers.

From the Norreys (of whom there are monumental and genealogical records in Bray Church) Ockwells passed to the Fettiplaces and the Days. Sir Thomas Day, the keenest hunter and hardest drinker in Berkshire, was, according to local tradition, knighted by Queen Anne for his attention in opening a gate for her Majesty to pass through. The identical spot is, or was recently, pointed out; but with due respect to tradition, I cannot help thinking the Queen must have had some better cause for conferring a knighthood.

The secluded villages of White Waltham and

Shottesbrooke, not far from Ockwells, are well worth a visit, both on account of their natural beauty and antiquities. At the former may be seen the remains of a moated manor house, where, according to the antiquary Hearne (who, by the way, was born at White Waltham), Henry VII.'s son, Prince Arthur, lived for a time. On a bank not far from the church stand the stocks and the whipping-post, in a good state of preservation.

The interior of the Cruciform church at Shottesbrooke is of exceptional interest, though I have only a hazy recollection of some good brasses and a fine old chest.

Of the picturesque almshouses at Bray and an old house called Philberts I also can record but a vague impression. The latter was the residence of William Chiffinch, the keeper of the back-stairs and boon companion of Charles II., who is said to have been a frequent visitor; the proximity of the house to Windsor affording the Merry Monarch convenient relaxation when he wished to throw aside his kingly dignity. Formerly there was here a fine bust of Nell Gwyn: it would be interesting to know what has become of it.

Opposite Bray, on the Buckinghamshire side of the

water, is the old seat of the Palmer family, Dorney, a secluded Jacobean house buried in a grove of elms. This was another favourite resort of Charles II.—so much so that it is painted as the background of one of his best portraits ; but it was more the beauty of its inmate than of the mansion or grounds which formed the attraction, as here for a time resided the beautiful Mrs. Palmer, who later on was created Countess of Castlemaine and Duchess of Cleveland, and of whom one reads so much in the Court annals of the time. The Royal visitor probably was not so welcome to the lady's husband, for the King became so much attached to her, and, as a natural consequence, she became so much attached to Whitehall Palace, that the result was a separation. Those who have perused Pepys's inimitable diary will have observed what an important figure this handsome and imperious woman cut in the gay Court. The following extract gives one a vivid impression of the strained relationships between Mr. and Mrs. Palmer—one of those little sidelights which so add to the fascinations of semi-historical episodes. I wonder no painter has selected a subject from this paragraph in the diary. The new Queen had recently arrived from Portugal, and Westminster was gaily bedecked

and thronged with loyal citizens anxious to get a glimpse of her. Pepys, usually to the fore upon such occasions, was busily engaged in making mental notes which were to be placed on record at the close of the day in his famous cipher. From the top of the present existing portion of the Palace he could get a magnificent view of the pageantry on the river.

"All the show," he says, "consisted chiefly in the number of boats and barges and two pageants—one of a king and another of a queen, with her maydes of Honour sitting at her feet very prettily; and they tell me the queen is Sir Richard Ford's daughter. Anon came the King and Queen in a barge under a canopy with ten thousand barges and boats, I think, for we could see no water for them, nor discern the King nor Queen. And so they landed at White Hall Bridge [the landing stage or stairs of the Palace], and the great guns on the other side went off. But that which pleased me best was that my Lady Castlemaine stood over against us on a piece of White Hall, where I glutted myself with looking on her. But methought it was strange to see her Lord and her upon the same place walking up and down without taking notice one of another,

only at first entry he put off his hat and she made him a very civil salute, but afterwards took no notice one of another; but both of them now and then would take their child which the nurse held in her armes and dandle it. One thing more: there happened a scaffold below to fall and we feared some hurt, but there was none, but she of all the great ladies only run down among the common rabble to see what hurt was done, and did take care of a child that received some little hurt, which methought was so noble. Anon there came one there booted and spurred that she talked long with. And by and by, she being in her hair, she put on his hat, which was but an ordinary one, to keep the wind off. But methinks it became her mightily, as everything else do."

Of Medmenham and Bisham Abbeys, beyond the famous Cliefden Woods of which Lord Ronald Gower writes so poetically in his *Reminiscences*, so much has been written that perhaps the less I have to say the better about these picturesque buildings, so familiar to frequenters of the river. The ghost of Lady Hoby at the latter—that learned sister of the Ladies Bacon, Burleigh, and Killigrew, who thrashed her little boy so unmercifully that he died

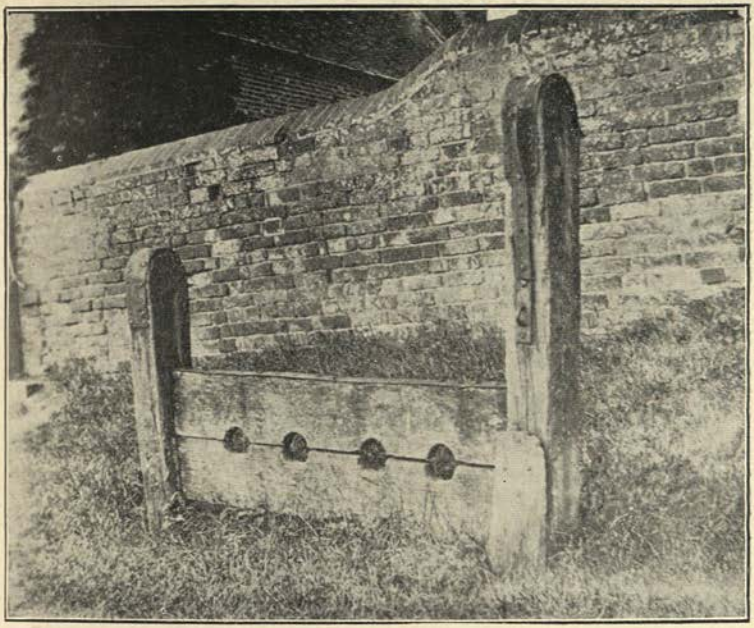
in consequence—is said to walk the grounds in widow's weeds as an everlasting penalty for her cruelty; and "if spirits from the vasty deep" ever were unrestful, surely those of Lord le Despenser, Sir William Stanhope, Sir John King, and other members of the notorious "Hell Fire Club" at Medmenham ought to haunt those ruins. Possibly they still repeat their terrible nocturnal orgies, but the Abbey precincts having degenerated into a hotel, in daytime the ruins are the haunt of the holiday-maker, who, as a rule, does not dwell much upon the past, and as far as spirits are concerned, has them in a modified form with soda or Apollinaris.

The secluded village of Hurley, like that of Medmenham, has some quaint old timber-framed cottages. The "Bell" also is a picturesque gabled hostelry of Elizabeth's time, which somehow or other recalls the opening chapter of that delightful romance *Kenilworth*, though the actual scene, of course, was supposed to have taken place at Cumnor, some miles to the north. There are, however, other historical associations at Hurley lingering around the scanty remains of the once magnificent mansion, Lady Place. The third lord of the now extinct Lovelace family of Hurley was one of the handsome Monmouth's patrons

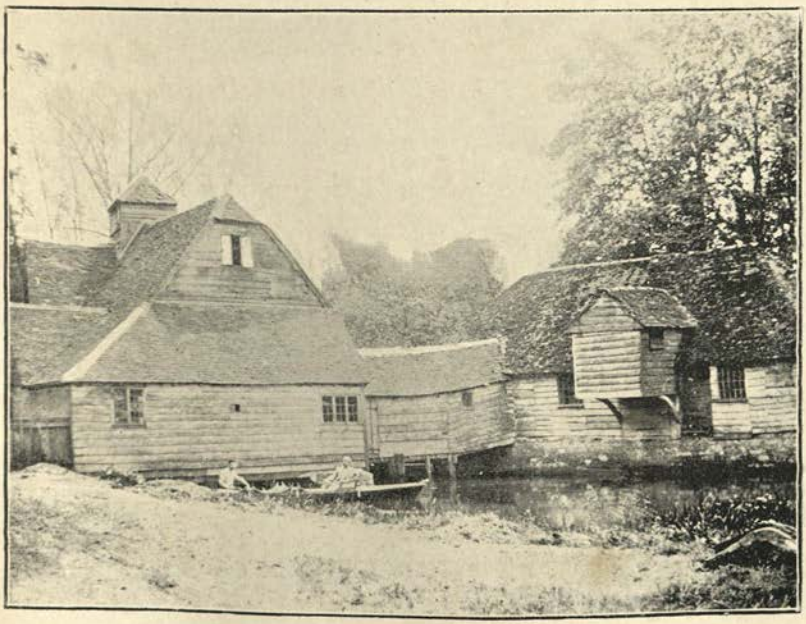
and companions—moreover, a scheming politician, like Shaftesbury, ever ready to embroil others and save himself. The young Duke, upon his quasi-Royal progresses, was a frequent guest at the house of this spendthrift Whig, and probably here was introduced to Lovelace's handsome cousin, the romantic young Baroness Wentworth of Toddington, who became so enamoured that when Monmouth was disgraced and had to quit the country, she must needs throw in her lot with his and follow him to Holland, and eventually to the grave, for she survived her lover but a few months.[1] Towards the termination of James II.'s brief reign we find Lovelace in the spacious vaults beneath his house receiving secret messages from the spies of William of Orange, and when that monarch had intimidated his father-in-law to such an extent that James sought refuge in flight, he failed not to acknowledge his indebtedness to the underground chambers of Lady Place by paying them a special visit.

The superb contents of the old house were dispersed soon after the death of the third Lord Lovelace, and I believe some of the family portraits now in Dulwich Gallery originally came from there.

[1] *Vide King Monmouth.*



STOCKS, WHITE WALTHAM.



MAPLEDURHAM MILL.

The property changed hands once or twice, and the house, after much neglect, was at length pulled down in the early part of last century, and all that now is to be seen is an old dovecote and the piers of an entrance gate, and the underground chambers before alluded to.

There is one more picturesque spot on the river I cannot pass without a word of admiration—viz., Mapledurham. The quaint old mill here has something about it far more fascinating than any other old water-mill I have seen, and yet it has no architectural "points" to recommend it, neither can the situation be compared with one I remember down by the river Avon and close against the walls of the romantic Castle of Warwick. As a youngster, I recollect it was somewhat of a penance to be taken daily to the Warwick mill, while the elder members of the party made sketches and read novels. At that tender age, when it is practically impossible to keep quiet or sit still for a moment, I suppose the impression was an unpleasant one, but it was lasting, for I can recall vividly to my memory the dreamy blending of sounds —the churning of the wheel, the rushing of the water, and the rustling of the tall trees overhead. Though I now look back with pleasure to the daily

visits to Warwick mill, undoubtedly it was a hardship at the time; in the same way, I suppose, one looks back with a certain amount of affection to the unpleasant occurrences at school, excepting the caning, however, which is never a pleasing reminiscence.

In the mass of trees beyond the mill of Mapledurham stands the old hall where the Blounts have lived for three centuries or more. There is a grim-looking side entrance with wrought-iron gates leading from the churchyard, which has a very uncanny appearance, but why, I cannot undertake to say. I had heard many rumours of the impenetrableness of this mansion, and had reason to congratulate myself in being shown round by a member of the Blount family. The interior, however, can nowhere compare with the exterior in point of interest, for it is gloomy, to say the least of it; this impression, however, may have been left by the long stone corridors and passages in the basement, and from the general bareness of the apartments, which at one time must have contained fine panelling, ceilings, and fireplaces. It is one of those houses like Charlecote, in Warwickshire, that have been spoiled by injudicious restoration as regards its interior. The main front

facing the great avenue has also lost a good deal of its original character owing to the insertion of plate-glass windows, which of course is disastrous to a Tudor house, otherwise picturesque with step gables and twisted chimneys.

CHAPTER XI

THERE are numerous picturesque spots between Mapledurham and Abingdon where, if space permitted, I should like to linger—at the smooth lawns and terraces of old Hardwick House, where the unfortunate Charles I. used to wander and ruminate over his ill-fortunes (with the exception of Ham House this is certainly the most interesting historical mansion on the river, and I understand the interior contains some grand old rooms);—at Ewelme, also a quaint little place a few miles from the river to the east, between the old-world towns of Wallingford and Watlington, where the fifteenth-century almshouses are as fine as anything of their kind in England;—at the pretty village of Long Wittenham, where stands an old stone cross, intact, and not, as is so often the case, with its summit knocked off. It is quite a popular error, by the way, to suppose that this wholesale destruction was the work of Cromwell, the Parliamentarian General, for the great

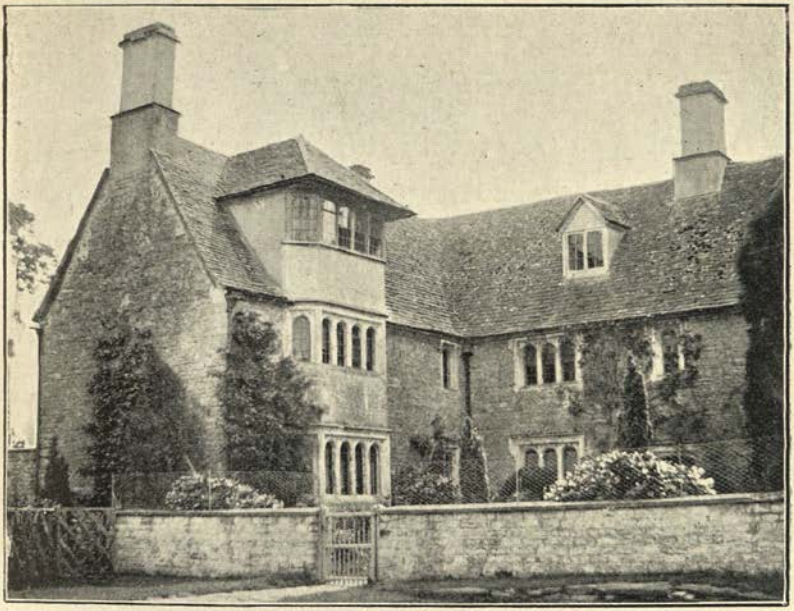
havoc was principally done a century before his time, by his namesake in Henry VIII.'s reign. Ecclesiastical buildings were certainly damaged considerably during the civil wars, but not to the extent, I think, that is usually supposed. It was the old fortified baronial halls which principally suffered under Oliver Cromwell.

Another fine cross may be seen at Dorchester—a decayed town which shows many evidences of its former importance. Quaint "bits" are to be found among the old houses and inns; and the monuments, the font, and brasses in the church are exceptionally fine; and here is that extraordinary Jesse window whose mullions form the branches of a genealogical tree.

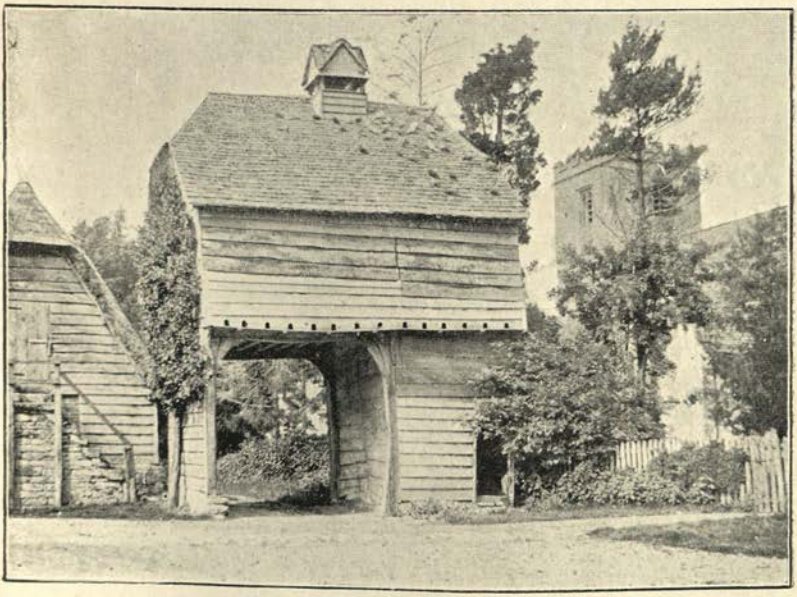
Nearer Abingdon is Sutton Courtney, where there are also many sixteenth- and seventeenth-century cottages. Of all riverside towns I think Abingdon is the most picturesque. Those who have approached it by water cannot but have been struck with the group of ancient buildings, with the old bridge and the graceful steeple of the church reflected in the river. The almshouses, Christ's Hospital, are of later date than those at Ewelme, but are also wonderfully quaint. A long wooden cloister runs all along the front, and in the centre over the

entrance gable are some curious paintings which give it a richness of colour that is very pleasing to the eye. Another portion of the building is later in date, but the contrast only improves the general effect. Abingdon Abbey must have been of great extent. There are several remains: the refectory is now used as a granary, and fortunately has not been spoiled by modern "improvements."

Those in search of the picturesque might do worse than tramp the country between Abingdon and Burford, in Oxfordshire. I have before me some reminiscences of such a journey, in the shape of photos, sketches, and an ordnance map which was used upon the occasion. I do not know whether it is peculiar to myself, but I always find enjoyment in perusing a map which has done service on a trip like this. The place-names, and even pencil marks upon it, will often recall little incidents long since forgotten. As an instance of how the memory is refreshed (?), at the moment I glance at the name of Appleton, to the west of Abingdon, I become conscious of a monotonous air, which was here drummed into my head whether I would or no by one of those infernal machines, a musical box. While I partook of tea at the little inn, in the next



NORTHMOOR RECTORY HOUSE.



OLD DOVECOTE, NORTHMOOR.

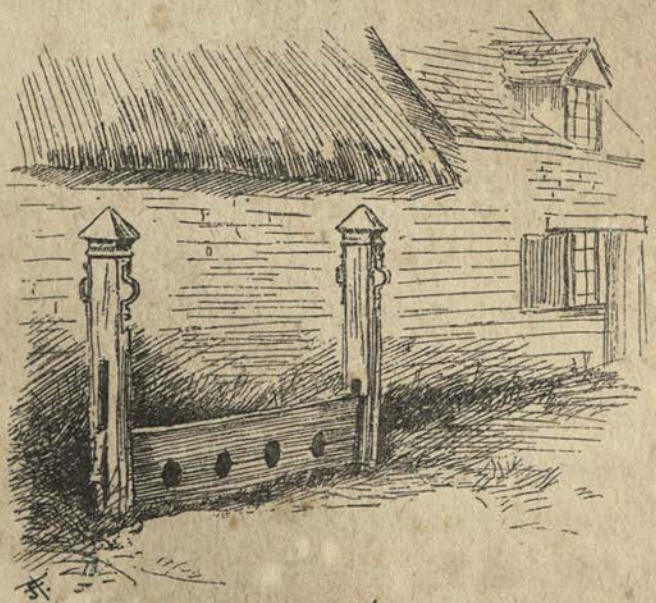
room was being performed, over and over again, one of those aggravating operatic airs which are full of flourishes—charming, no doubt, in the opera house or upon an orchestra, but when each twiddle and twirl is repeated with the exactness, the hair-breadth accuracy, of the balance at the Bank of England which throws aside the light sovereigns, it palls upon one to a degree. Whether the musical box could play other tunes I do not know, but it harped for ever upon this melancholy dirge, until I had to abandon my repast and cram my fingers in my ears. I had never heard the air before, nor do I ever want to hear it again; indeed, that would be quite unnecessary, for at this moment I could repeat it with its original accuracy. I wonder, at those inns where they have automatic music nowadays, whether the proprietors ever feel inclined to disable the machinery for ever. I fear I should, were I the unhappy possessor. But the idea of taking music to Appleton savours of taking coals to Newcastle, for nothing could be more melodious than its peal of bells. Those who have heard the chimes will, I think, be of my opinion.

Northmoor, to the north-west of Appleton, possesses a curious sixteenth-century rectory house,

with a remarkably picturesque dovecote by the side of it. These, with the church tower, make an attractive group. Farther to the west, near Standlake, is a moated farmhouse, called Gaunt House, with the remains of a drawbridge. Farther north is the sequestered village of Stanton Harcourt, where descendants of the ancient family of Harcourt have lived since the reign of Stephen. The remains of the manor house date principally from the time of Henry IV. The kitchen is the most remarkable portion, being in many respects similar to that at Glastonbury—its extinguisher roof rising out of the trees looks very peculiar in the distance. There are no shafts or flues by which the smoke from fires lighted within the building can escape. The kitchen itself is nothing more than a great square chimney with a conical top, where the smoke ascends unchecked, as it does in the baronial hall at Penshurst. The inside of the extinguisher and the inside walls of this primitive apartment are black with the soot of centuries. One cannot help thinking that the cook of Henry IV.'s time did not have a very good time of it in this atmosphere of smoke—an arduous task, moreover, for in the event of the wind changing, unless he cared to be smoke-dried like a haddock,

he would have to ascend to the roof by a precipitous turret staircase to adjust the ventilators, opening those at the opposite side from whence the wind came.

The domestic of to-day, who invariably finds fault with our modern kitcheners, should pay a visit



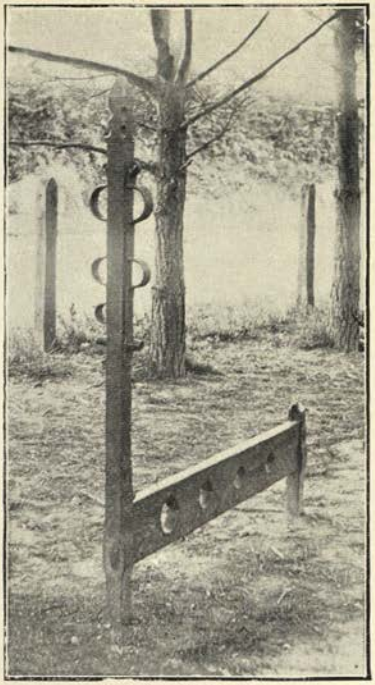
The Stocks. Stanton Harcourt.

to Stanton Harcourt. I think it would engender a more contented frame of mind for do not philosophers say there is nothing so soothing as to contemplate worse conditions than our own?

In a little room at the top of another portion of the building Pope found congenial seclusion for trans-

lating the fifth book of Homer. The Harcourts had deserted the old place many years before, so the poet had the ruinous house all to himself. The parish stocks must not pass unnoticed; they are unprotected, rotting by the side of the road. I am glad to see that in many places care is now taken of these instruments of an obsolete punishment—indeed, it is very necessary to place them in some enclosure to prevent wanton destruction.

Only just in time have the local authorities placed railings around the remains of the stocks on Hadley Common, near Barnet; for, becoming dilapidated, they soon make their way to the cottager's fire-grate. At a village in Essex some years ago I thought I was very chivalrous in championing the cause of a bad case. I noticed that the stocks were on their last legs, so to speak—having nobody else's to fall back upon, I suppose—so I repaired to the local blacksmith with the request that he should repair the stocks. A small coin changed hands, but he did not take "the tip" in the manner that I had wished, for when I next visited the village, the portion which had been loose had disappeared—gone for ever. By now perhaps the lower plank has followed its mate, and the whipping-



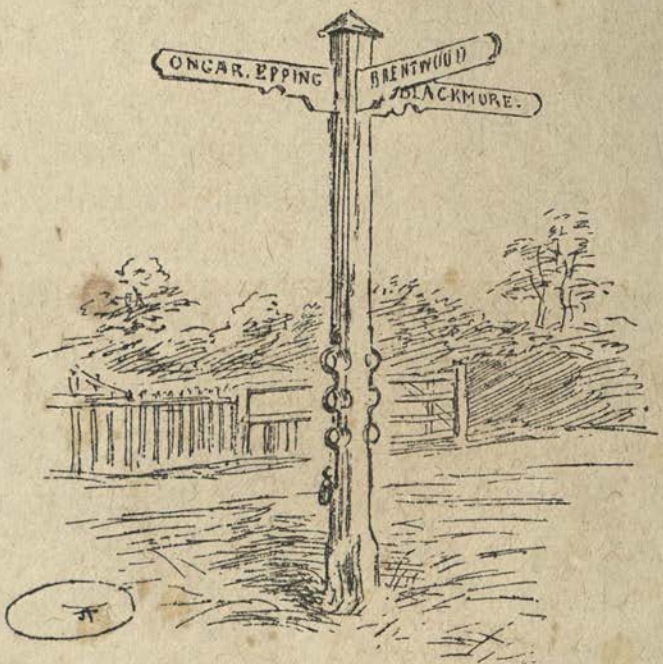
STOCKS, NINFIELD.

GAUNT HOUSE.

post will next be uprooted. If the stocks had been made of iron instead of wood, as is the case at Ninfield, in Sussex, they could defy the onslaughts of such vandals. The modern yokel has a strange idea as to how his ancestors were inserted in the stocks. I once had it explained to me how the wrists and the feet were pinned down parallel, the hands on one side of the post and the feet on the other, and it is not uncommonly believed that the legs were placed in the manacles at the top of the pole. Upon one of these instruments (a portable one now preserved in a church) I have seen tiny hoops of iron to encircle the wrists of a child. If a parish could not run to the expense of a whipping-post and stocks combined, the difficulty was got over by making a signpost serve a double purpose. Such an example may be seen at the remote parish of Stondon Massey, in Essex.

Of Witney I remember but little beyond the old "Butter Cross" and a fine, but restored, cruciform church with a lofty spire; the former, I believe, was partially destroyed a few years ago. Following the course of the willow-girt Wildrush river, we reach the ruins of Minster Lovel, of historic and romantic associations. In a secret vault beneath the massive

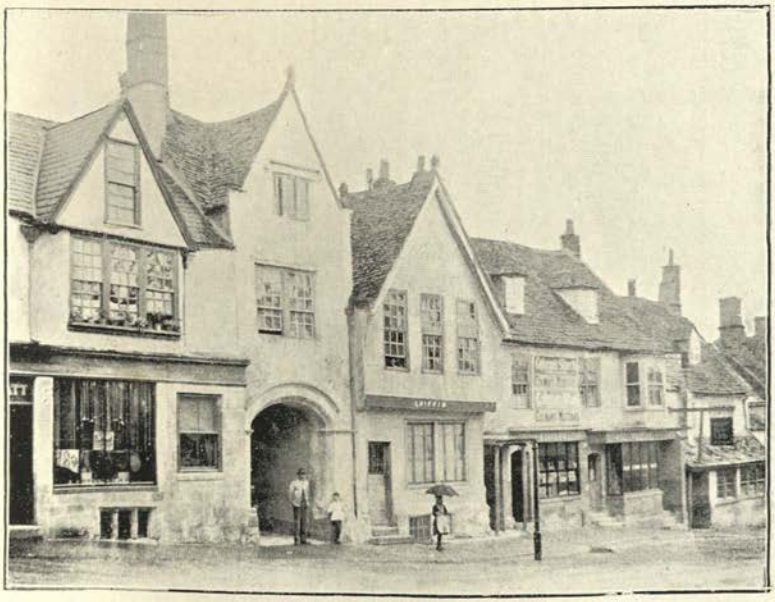
walls one of its ancient lords secreted himself so as to avert the penalty of treason, only, however, to meet a far more terrible fate, for the portion of solid masonry which gave him admittance for some



Whipping Post, Stondon Massey

reason or other could not be opened again, and not until two centuries had elapsed and the house was demolished was the unfortunate man's premature tomb discovered.

ASTHALL MANOR HOUSE.



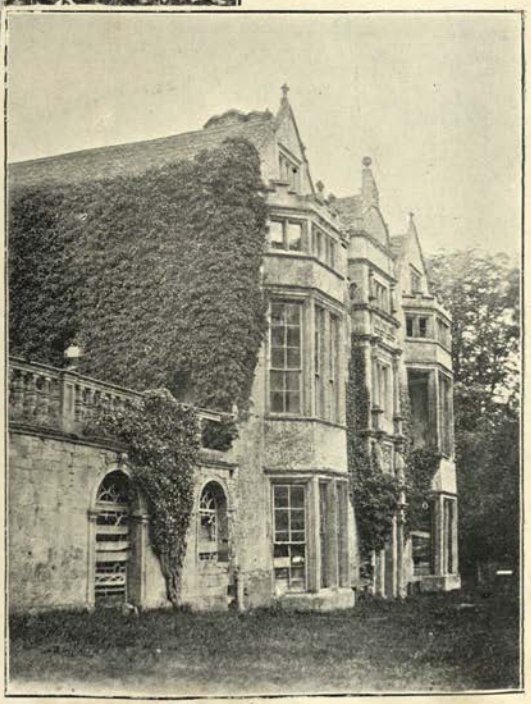
BURFORD.

Still following the course of the pretty Wildrush, we pass through Asthall, with its Elizabethan manor house near the church, and presently enter the old town of Burford. This is one of the oldest places imaginable; anything up-to-date or even comparatively modern is quite out of place here, and since the old coaching days it has not advanced, but gone entirely to sleep, for the railway has given it "a wide berth," and left the town to get on as best it can. But I forgot: there is one sign of civilisation in evidence—the Salvation Army, who, when I was there, seemed to have taken the place by storm. On the Sunday evening that I made my entry the noble army had the whole place to themselves, and were making night melodious with their song. But horror! they had taken possession of the "Old Bear Inn"—a fine old hostelry, with quaint oriel windows and a round tower in the yard—*for barracks*! I expect by now they have pulled it down and rebuilt it. With the exception of the Salvationists, everything is in keeping. There is nothing to mar the general harmony. The Burfordites have not even built a Jubilee clock tower, I rejoice to say; they are content with one by "The Tollsey," surmounting a kind of combination town hall and lock-up. Even

the maid of the inn where I stopped was in keeping with the rest, for she cannot have been far short of an octogenarian. "It don't seem so long ago," said she, "since I saw a drunken man lying in the stocks at the Tollsey." "Are the stocks still there?" I questioned. "Yes," she said, "unless they have moved them." She went out to see if they were there; but they had been taken away—*twenty years* before! I merely give this as an instance of how slowly things move here. Twenty years, or fifty, or a hundred makes no perceptible difference at Burford. The shops—or, rather, shop, I should say, for I don't remember more than one—was lighted by a solitary "dip," and the old man who kept the shop weighed out tobacco in enormous scales which might have come out the ark.

Looking up or down the great wide street one could see nothing but picturesque pointed gables and deep-set mullioned windows. The beautiful old church is more like a small cathedral, and is full of interest externally and internally. The old Priory, not far off, is a sad spectacle of neglect and decay, but it still is not too late if somebody would take it in hand (perhaps they have ere this), although a great fissure runs from roof to basement, and masses of stone

BURFORD PRIORY.



BURFORD PRIORY.

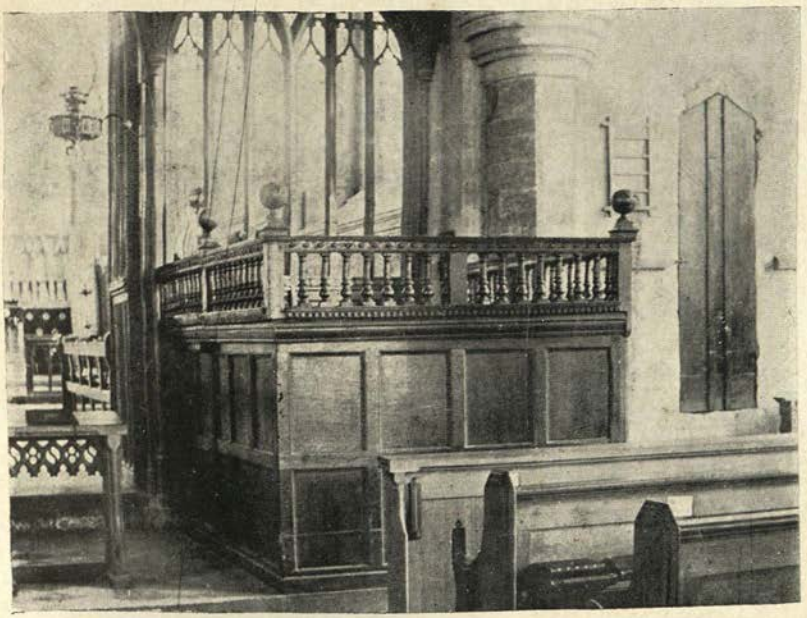
look on the verge of falling. The carved oak of the chapel is open to the ravages of the weather, and fast crumbling into dust. Close by is an old stone balustrade, which figures in S. E. Waller's poetic picture, "The Empty Saddle."

In the seventeenth century the Priory was the seat of Lenthall, the Speaker, upon whom, since he took the cause of the Commons against the King, a curse is said to have fallen. The old house as it looks to-day certainly gives one the impression of the embodiment of that curse. I remember seeing Lenthall's portrait—the original which formerly hung in the drawing-room at Burford—at a sale at Christie's. The face was firm, and looked as if its owner had the strength of his own convictions, and this Lenthall evidently had.

CHAPTER XII

THOUGH I am much tempted to cross the border into Gloucestershire, the present range of my rambles must be limited. I will therefore work my way in the direction of Banbury, and thence go eastwards, that I may recall impressions in certain parts of Northamptonshire, Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Middlesex, and Essex, in which last county I must for the present close my wanderings in search of the picturesque.

At Shipton-under-Wychwood, to the north of Burford, there is a fine old roadside inn with stone Early Tudor entrance gate and windows, which I found, however, to be less attractive in regard to its accommodation than in its architectural features; but I speak of some years ago, and the management may have changed for the better. This house doubtless was standing long before Shipton Court was built in Elizabeth's reign. Less pretentious than the Court is the adjacent manor



THE WILMOT PEW, ADDERBURY.

house of Ascott-under-Wychwood, a long, low rambling building of stone, with a weather-worn aspect about it which must have induced many artists who have noticed it from the windows of the train to alight at the next station upon some future occasion.

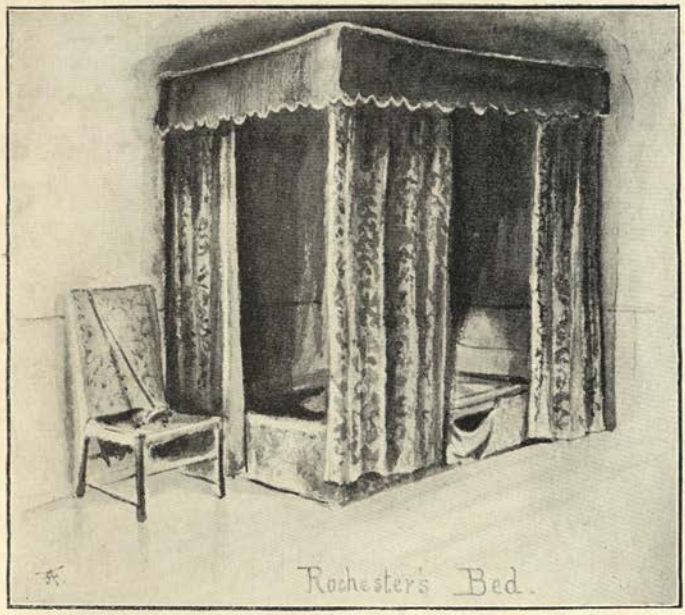
In the pretty little church of Spilsbury, some four miles to the north-east, lie the remains of that well-known character of Charles II.'s Court—the brilliant but notoriously profligate Earl of Rochester. No tablet, however, records his interment. He was born in the mansion, Ditchley Park, close by, but lived principally at Adderbury, a village to the east of Banbury, where in the grand old church may be seen the memorial pew of the Wilmots, though the family have been extinct for over a couple of centuries—at least it was pointed out to me as "Rochester's pew," but I should think it very doubtful whether he ever had been seen within it. Local tradition, though silent upon this point, has many stories to recount of his lordship's wild and eccentric proceedings when he came into Oxfordshire for change of air and scene, or when disgrace at Court enforced a temporary retirement.

Alderbury House, where he lived upon these occasions, retains but few vestiges of the building of

that day, though the Wilmot arms may still be seen upon a water-pipe. The furniture and pictures also long since have been dispersed, but Rochester's mirror remained until recently, though that also has now disappeared. A far more interesting relic may still be seen in one of the lodges at Woodstock Park, otherwise Blenheim, of which he was ranger—viz., the tattered and faded bed upon which the Earl died. I need scarcely refer to Burnet's well-known account of the penitent's last hours. There is pathetic interest in this old relic. Looking at it, one can almost picture reclining upon it the emaciated form of the prematurely aged debauchee, listening intently to the grave solicitations of the Bishop. It is a subject which, if handled with skill, should make a dramatic and popular picture.

"I do verily believe," says Dr. Burnet in his history of his "Own Time," "he was then so entirely changed that if he had recovered he would have made good all his resolutions."

Ditchley is mainly interesting for its splendid collection of portraits, and I had the good fortune to have these fully described to me by the owner, Viscount Dillon, who has a marvellous knowledge of all things ancient, from flint arrow-heads to Crom-



"CROWN INN," SHIPTON-UNDER-WYCHWOOD.

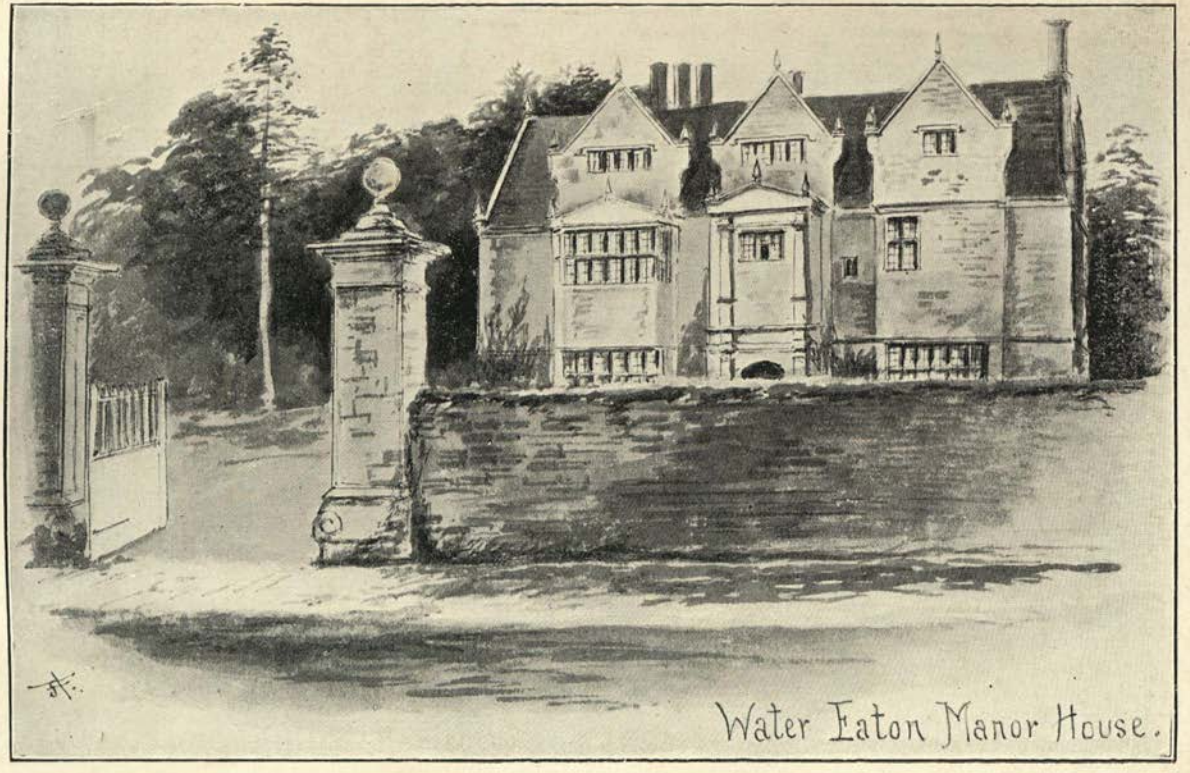
wellian helmets. I only wish I could have stored up for future reference all the information I learned in an hour, or upon a subsequent occasion in the Tower armoury, where his lordship seems to be as much at home as at Ditchley.

Some of Lely's best works may be seen in this house, the portraits of Charles II. and the beautiful Duchess of Cleveland (of whom I have previously spoken) being particularly noticeable. Their daughter Charlotte, the young Countess of Lichfield, was a great favourite of the King when upon his visits to Ditchley; after a good dinner, she is said to have soothed him to sleep by tickling his Royal nose with a feather. Here may also be seen the portrait of Sir Henry Lee and his faithful dog, from whom Scott got his idea of the typical old cavalier in his romance, *Woodstock*.

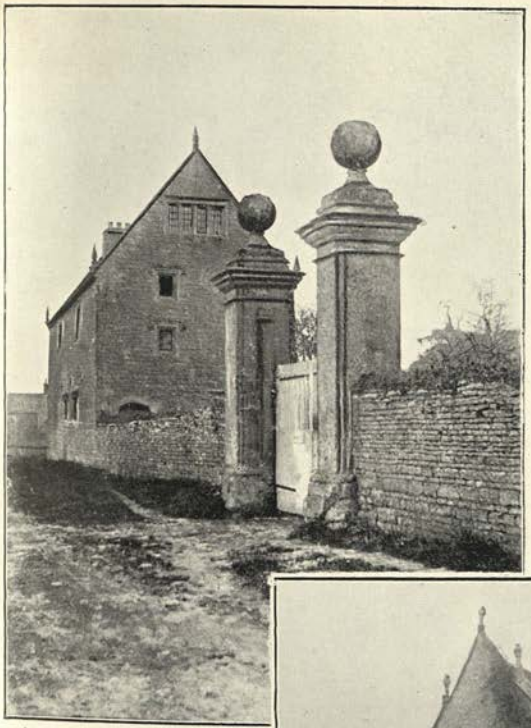
Though classical, the exterior of Ditchley has not the ponderous formality and depressing severity of Blenheim. The wonders of that palace I will leave to others more competent than myself to describe. I must own these lofty, comfortless, sarcophagus-like saloons leave a frigid impression upon me. They strike one with a chill even in the dog-days! Altogether these magnificent palaces

appeal to me far less than the unpretentious little manor house which has degenerated into a farm; a place such, for instance, as Hampton Gay, to the east of Woodstock. I shall always regret that I did not carry away with me any mementoes of my visit there, either in the shape of sketches or snapshots, for, alas! the old place was burned down shortly afterwards. I remember one very fine panelled room, with a great bay window and a splendid carved mantelpiece. Not far from Hampton Gay is the very pretty little village of Wood Eaton, where stands the shaft of an old cross upon the village green, and beyond, in an isolated position, with seemingly no direct roads leading to it, the very compact little Jacobean manor house of Water Eaton.

Even the gloomy manor house of Fritwell, some eight miles to the north of Hampton Gay, is more cheerful than Blenheim. The house had been unoccupied for some considerable time save by a caretaker, and the timid little woman who at length appeared in answer to continual hammerings at the door looked as if her nervous system had been shattered by the loneliness of the house and the continual fear of burglars. Certainly there was



Water Eaton Manor House.



WATER EATON MANOR HOUSE.

FRITWELL MANOR HOUSE.

nothing worth stealing, including the lady herself—but that is a detail. Some females, I think, believe they are never secure against being carried off by brute force, as in the case of the Sabine women. I once attempted to assist a very shaky and wrinkled old lady—certainly over ninety—to alight from a railway carriage, but my offer was resented in no small degree, and my reward was a withering look from head to foot. Undoubtedly this damsel was in fear of abduction! The incident recalls a laudatory epitaph I saw in a churchyard in East Devon. I forget the exact wording, but the sum and substance was this: a worthy couple occupied one grave; the husband died first, and "*after five years'* exemplary widowhood" his wife followed him to the grave. This, of course, was quite as it should be, and was very nicely expressed in the original, but one could scarcely forbear to smile when the ages were taken into account. The husband died in 1792, aged eighty-five; and the wife in 1797, aged ninety!

To return to Fritwell: my intentions appearing honourable, I was admitted after considerable unbarring and unbolting, and in the dark panelled chambers was told some of the most creepy stories

of a *human* kennel up in the garrets, and how a former lord of the manor had imprisoned his brother in it for years; but why he should have selected a kennel I could not gather, for space was not limited by any means in the upper regions of the house. A discoloration on a plaster wall was said to resemble the profile of some unfortunate nun, but as I could make neither head out of this nor tail out of the kennel, both remain unfathomed mysteries, as far as my comprehension goes. I fear I was not sufficiently awe-struck. The impression made was no deeper than that upon the old lady who visited the *Victory*, and upon being shown the spot on deck where Nelson fell, remarked: "Well, its slippy enough!" There used to be a typical showman at the Rye House—an old Scotchman who told blood-curdling stories by the light of a torch in "the dungeons and caves." The "stalactites" were impressive, but on my way to the railway station after leaving the "Castle," somebody in the know pointed out the man who had manufactured them!

Adderbury, of which I have already spoken, is about eight miles to the north-west of Fritwell. Farther in the same direction are two of the finest

old mansions in Oxfordshire—Broughton Castle and Wroxton Abbey. But it is difficult to determine which is the more picturesque of the two, or to draw a comparison; for the one has a wide clear moat, in which the gables and battlements are reflected, whereas there is no water in close proximity to the other. Wroxton is embosomed in trees, and its Jacobean architecture is more elaborate and ornamental. It has perhaps suffered less from restoration than Broughton, but both contain fine carvings and interesting pictures and furniture. There also are many beautiful miniatures at Wroxton, but it is one of those collections where, unfortunately, the names have not been preserved, and some well-known historical faces are merely classified as "the portrait of a gentleman" or "the portrait of a lady," as the case may be.

At a little village equi-distant from both Wroxton and Broughton I once found comfortable quarters for a summer—or, rather, autumn—holiday. I had cycled over a stretch of country with which I had been anxious to become reacquainted—viz., the corner of Northamptonshire which borders the northern extremity of Oxfordshire—and by the time I arrived within a mile or so of my destination it

was getting dark. Having dismounted owing to the steepness of the road, I was ascending a hill, when I passed an old man with a long white beard who looked very hard at me. There was nothing very remarkable in this, nor in the fact that as he passed I noticed he was carrying behind him a very ugly-looking stick; but I did think it somewhat remarkable that after walking twenty yards or so he should turn round and follow me. I certainly began to feel doubtful as to his intentions. In the deepening shade, on we walked, always with the same space of road between us. If I quickened my pace, so did my mysterious companion; if I slackened it, he did likewise. Presently, however, he began to gain ground; the road was still uphill and I couldn't ride, so I thought it best to bring the matter to a climax. I stopped dead. On he came steathily. I put myself upon the defensive. He was now close at hand. He looked fixedly at me. I felt inclined to strike first, but did not. He raised his arm and then—his hat. "Excuse me," he said, "might you be the gent who has taken apartments?" Then it dawned upon me this was my future host. Fearing I might miss the turning which led to his house, he had walked on a couple of miles in the

direction whence I had said I was coming, and, passing me, was doubtful as to whether I was his man. So he kept an eye upon my movements, that I might not lose my way. But why didn't he speak? A word would have explained everything.

The proximity of Compton Wynyates made this country retreat most delightful. To see that wonderful old house under every aspect of light and shade, and to study it from every conceivable point of view, was to me, at any rate, an enormous treat. But the mansion belongs to Warwickshire, and if once I step across the border, there are too many attractions to resist—therefore, I will keep to my plan of going eastwards.

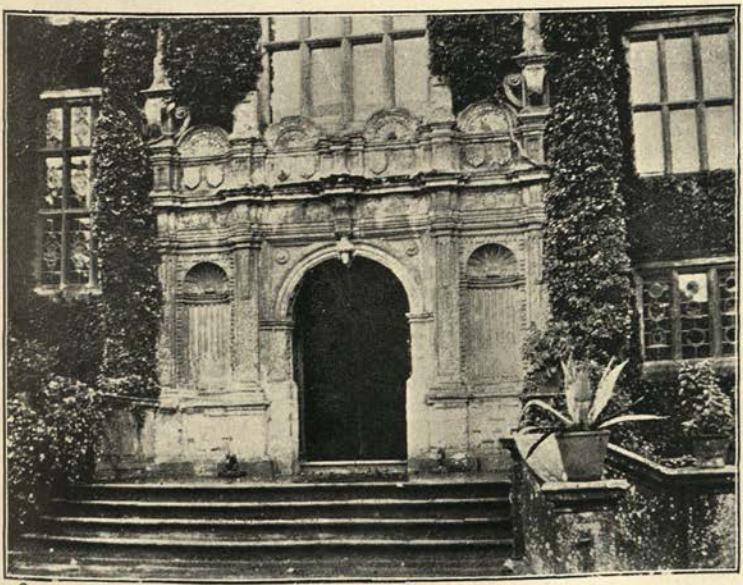
The railway which now runs between Blisworth and Stratford-on-Avon some years ago presented a very desolate appearance. One occasionally comes across these disused railroads. What a woe-begone, forlorn aspect they have! Excepting the barren, blighted country adjacent to a worked-out coal-mine, nothing looks so unprosperous.

I was stopping at the tiny village of Slapton, and was anxious to visit the old house of Canons Ashby, and having heard that there was a sort of apology for a train which traversed the grass-grown line *once*

a week, I lay in wait for it at the then disused station of Blakesley. Within an hour or so of the allotted time the train arrived, and the engine-driver got down to ask where I should like to alight. There was no hurry. I took out my map and pointed out the spot. But he had had no dealings with maps and didn't understand their bearings; so he said he would pull up in the course of a few miles to receive fresh instructions. The medley of luggage trucks and one obsolete passenger carriage crawled off, bumping its way over stones and sunken sleepers in a manner which would have proved efficacious to any one with a disordered liver. We travelled so slowly at times that I felt inclined to get out and push, but presently down got the engine-driver again, and pointed out the church of Moreton Pinkney. I referred to the map and found that would do, so jumped down, tipped the man, and thanking him for his kind offer to bring me back next week, said that I intended to walk back that day along the line. Then I climbed over a hedge, and made a "bee-line" for the landmark, while the prehistoric conveyance jolted on its weary way to Shakespeare-land.

Presently my progress was impeded by a

CANONS ASHBY.



WROXTON ABBEY.

remarkable wall with tall pointed Elizabethan ornaments at every corner. Out came my sketch-book, and I set to work. But I did not know that I was observed. On the other side of the wall stood an old gentleman in the costume of the early 'fifties, with a high white stock up to his ears. "What are you drawing, my lad?" said he, coming forward. I trembled in my shoes, and held out the book. "Good!" said he. "Where d'ye come from?" I said I was stopping at Slapton Rectory. This, I suppose, confirmed my respectability, for he gave me a sounding slap on the back, and told me to come in and have some bread and cheese. I followed him into one of the quaintest old courtyards imaginable, not unlike one of the old moss-grown quadrangles at Haddon, and from there into old panelled rooms of black oak with coved ceilings and enormous pendants, beautifully carved mantelpieces, Jacobean tables and chairs, old portraits, armour—everything, in fact, in keeping—"nothing new!" Lunch was evidently over, but the table was groaning with good things. I was told to "tuck in," which I did forthwith. "This is Lady Dryden," said mine host, as his wife came into the room. "We're going to drive to Fawsley. It's

a better old place than this—will you come with us, or stop here and do your sketching?" I preferred the latter, and was supremely happy in having so glorious an old house all to myself. Towards the evening I wandered back to the ruinous railway line, and had no difficulty in finding my way back to Slapton, with a vivid and lasting impression of a typical old English squire.

CHAPTER XIII

THOUGH Slapton itself is far from picturesque, the villages hereabouts have a very ancient appearance, and abound in Tudor remains. Moreton Pinkney may be specified as one of them. Going southwards towards Buckingham, many queer old places may be taken on the way, such as Astwell Mill, Steene House, Lillingston Lovell Church (where they still or until recently used a barrel-organ), and Wickin, where the stocks remain. Then there is world-renowned Stowe, where lately the ex-Royal House of France held their little Court.

Middle, Steeple, and East Claydon, five miles to the south of Buckingham, must be familiar to those who have perused the pages of the delightful Verney Memoirs, drawn from the voluminous manuscripts at Claydon House. Nothing could be more realistic than the description of country life of the time of Charles I. which may be gathered from the correspondence of the good old cavalier,

Sir Edmund Verney, who fell at Edgehill bearing the King's standard. The details of the simple home life read almost as if they had been penned in the present time. I have not been inside the house, but I believe it is full of interest.

Some curious superstitions still linger in this part of Buckinghamshire. A remarkable instance is recorded of Quainton. Many years ago there was a tree here which was reputed to bud and bloom only on Christmas Day, and the villagers had such faith in the belief that they would sooner acknowledge that the new style of the almanack was in error than that the tree could fail in performing the miracle. Quainton turned out *en masse* one Christmas Eve to witness what would happen; but as nothing did happen, they refused to acknowledge the next day as Christmas Day, and would not keep it as a holiday.

Of all the old houses in Buckinghamshire, Creslow Manor House, some six miles to the north of Aylesbury, is the most picturesque. Creslow Pastures, as it is sometimes called, stands a little way off the main road, and its old chapel, barns, and out-buildings altogether make a charming group. To ascribe a date to the house would be impossible, for it is a harmonious mixture of many periods.

The tower, perhaps, is the oldest portion, and dates back to the time of Edward III., or earlier. The gentleman farmer whose family has resided there for some generations kindly took me round, from the vaults up to the roof, where a glorious view may be obtained.

The old crypt has a very graceful groined roof. From this crypt a subterranean passage *is supposed* to run—I forget how far, but a couple of miles at least. A newel staircase leads from the crypt to an old room above, which has Early Gothic doors and windows. Formerly there were rumours current that this room was haunted, but the present resident puts but little faith in such stories, possibly from the fact that the ghost, as in the case of most spiritual *séances*, only works, or worked, in the dark. The last visitation is said to have happened quite fifty years ago, so the uneasy spirit probably has been successfully laid. By all accounts, the lady—for the apparition was a lady—made her entry from the crypt, and for some reason or other, as might be judged from the sound, put her silken gown into violent motion. This naturally suggests the idea of shaking off the beetles and spiders who might have gained a holding in the lower apartment—indeed, I might go

so far as to affirm that one courageous gentleman, who in the darkness endeavoured to clasp *the noise* in his arms, actually did get hold of a fat spider; so doubtless my inference is correct, that the lady had very good reasons for the vigorous rustling of her garments upon leaving the lower regions.

I forgot to mention the human bones in the crypt. I casually picked up a thigh-bone, and, ruminating upon the possibilities of its past, like Hamlet over Yorick's skull, I was horrified in looking round to observe — the dog who had followed us about the premises was actually begging for it!

Of the "Pastures" of Creslow I can say nothing, beyond the fact that one meadow is locally said to be one of the largest in England. They were white with snow, as were the roofs of the picturesque old houses at the adjacent village of Whitchurch. The remainder of the impressions of this visit are the cold drive and a cosy tea at the "Old King's Head" at Aylesbury—an ancient hostelry containing a large dining-hall with an immense Tudor diamond-paned oak mullioned window. A cheerful wood fire was reflected in the old rafters of the roof, and, adding to the snugness of the

room, only made one dread the more the hour for turning out into the biting east wind.

Aylesbury Church has some good monuments and a fine array of miserere seats; but what interested me most, was the rough old oak Gothic wardrobe for the vestments. The almshouses near the church unfortunately have been restored—and spoiled. There are many places of interest to the west of Aylesbury. In a drive of about ten miles one may include Hartwell, Dinton, Winchendon, Dorton, and Boarstall.

The mansion house of Hartwell is, of course, one of the finest in the county. It has an imposing Elizabethan front with lofty mullioned bays and a fine porch, over which is a very peculiar corbel supporting an oriel window. Opposite this north front extends a magnificent avenue. I intended to have asked to see the staircase here—a remarkable one, I believe, with the carved figures in oak of heroes biblical, heathen, historical, and otherwise; but the great white front of the mansion struck me with awe, or perhaps it was a sight of the butler—at any rate, my courage failed, and I contented myself with having seen the exterior.

A little way off the main road, a mile or so farther south-west, is Dinton. Over a high wall

peep the pretty red-brick gables of the hall—a stately pile erected, I believe, in the reign of James I. In the porch of the church is one of the finest Norman doorways I have ever seen (excepting Iffley). The interior is entirely spoiled by a hideous organ, painted blue, red, and gold, stuck right in front of the altar. The glaring colours kill everything else in the church, excepting, by the way, some live but sleepy bats, which an old woman was sweeping out of the door with her broom. I know nothing of natural history, but presume these little creatures are helpless in the daylight, for they didn't attempt to fly away. I, however, handled them with caution, for they seemed inclined to bite, and had remarkable muscular strength in the jaw—at least, one had, who, like Father William in *Alice in Wonderland*, perhaps was in the habit of arguing with his wife.

The furniture of the church is particularly fine, though one splendid oak table had been painted all over a hideous buff colour. There was a grand oak chest with the graceful linen-panelling, an Elizabethan pulpit, and a Jacobean wardrobe for the choristers' garments, opposite to which hung an old helmet of the time of Charles I. Some little distance from the church and hall of Dinton are the ruins of an

old castle with very strangely shaped windows, but about this I could learn nothing; nor could I ascertain where was the underground residence of the hermit who traditionally is said to have been Charles I.'s executioner. He was the secretary to the regicide Simon Mayne, who died in the Tower of London, and lies buried in the church at Dinton. The hiding-place in the hall where he hid himself prior to his capture has been destroyed. [1]

Lower Winchendon, farther to the north-west, might belong to Warwickshire. Its timber cottages and orchards have very much the character of a village in the Midlands.

The old manor house, near the church, has been spoiled by the restorer, who, by the addition of laths and cement, has done his best to make it look as new as possible. The church was locked, but in the churchyard I found the old parish clerk, who, as he trimmed up the graves, remarked that in the old days people had to look after their own graves —meaning, I presume, the graves of their late lamented relatives. He evidently was very proud of the church and the position he occupied on Sundays in the "three-deeker." The top story

[1] *Vide Secret Chambers.*

was a good carved oak pulpit, but painted yellow and grained. Most of the pews were those high Georgian boxes, but there were also a good many of the original benches, with massive but very narrow seats. As the church is being restored bit by bit, I said, "I suppose you will remove these old pews"—pointing to the latter. "Oh, dear, no!" said he; "Mrs. Higgins (I think that was the name) wouldn't have them touched for the world." I feel grateful to Mrs. Higgins, for not long since I saw a church in the Midlands where the original pews, including some beautifully carved bench-ends, had been sold to a builder in New York to provide funds towards the restoration! But I know a worse case of vandalism, where an elaborately carved Jacobean pulpit was removed to make place for a brand new one, and the old carving was put up on the sides of the cabin of the private yacht of the vicar! Under a tree outside the church wall is a stump of wood, the last vestige of the whipping-post. Close by is the village school, which fact is quite enough to account for its destruction. I noticed a novel support—or, rather, post—to a wicket gate, in one of the cottages—viz., the newel of a Jacobean staircase; possibly it came out of

the manor house when that building was submitted to the restorer's tender mercy. The Priory, the old seat of the Goodwyns, Tyringhams, and Whartons, I believe is also an interesting house, but I had not time to go in search of it.

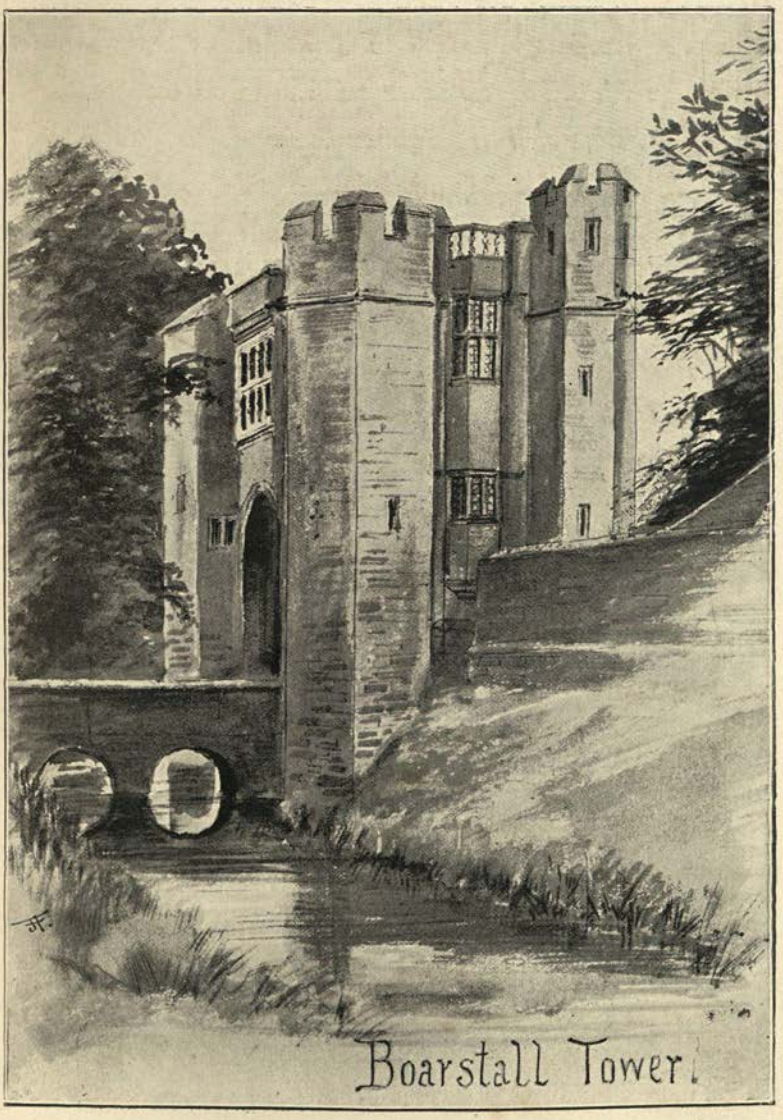
Dorton, to the north-west, is a little more in touch with the world; indeed, when people talk of taking "the tramway," it sounds quite civilised; but this light railway is far from a modern institution, and has somewhat the appearance that the deserted line had in Northamptonshire. I did not see the train or tram, but one of the stations I saw, and that had a most antiquated look.

Dorton House is a spacious mansion of Charles I.'s time, the exterior of which would be vastly improved if the coating of cement with which it is entirely cased were removed. This cement is weather-worn and stained, and gives the house a dilapidated appearance. The Georgian goth who destroyed the exterior of the house is also in evidence in the interior, for all the oak carvings have been daubed over with yellow and white paint. A really careful restoration would make this house one of the most interesting in the county. There are two magnificent

oak staircases, some elaborate ceilings, a beautiful Jacobean screen in the hall, carved mantelpieces, and last, but not least, Queen Elizabeth's Bedroom, with the bed upon which her Majesty is said to have slept. The house has not been used as a residence for years. Its owner, the last of a long line of Aubreys,[1] prefers the attractions of town to the solitude of this out-of-the-world spot, which can hardly be wondered at considering he is a bachelor. A tiny little church embosomed in trees, near the hall, is quite a typical one. As a picture it is perfect, but architecturally it is not remarkable.

Boarstall Tower, some two miles to the west, was the last stronghold in the county which held out for the King, but eventually surrendered to Fairfax in June, 1646. Judging from the existing remains, it must have been an important house, such as Basing—a massive gatehouse of stone, with corner embattled turrets, and a large room over the entrance. At a farmhouse close by (originally part of the offices, I should imagine) I was told I should find a caretaker within, so I crossed the moat, which is still supplied by a stream, and entered a little courtyard, where I found an old gentleman, but; as I was addressing him,

[1] I hear Mr. Aubrey died recently.



Boarstall Tower.

a young woman came forward, and, touching her forehead with her hand, led me aside towards the moat; but I was further mystified when the father did the same and led me in the opposite direction. I was contemplating flight when he told me that his daughter was mentally afflicted, so I followed him up a winding turret staircase to a spacious apartment with a wide Tudor fireplace and a ceiling crossed with great oak beams. In the casements of a large bay window was some good stained glass, showing the arms of the various possessors of Boarstall, from De Lazures of the fourteenth to Aubrey of the seventeenth century. The wrought-iron fastenings to these window casements were both graceful in design and ingenious in construction; a combined spring bolt and latch in as good a state of preservation as when inserted. As the old-fashioned lattice windows are now so frequently introduced into our modern dwellings, similar fastenings might be adopted with advantage.

Over the rude Gothic entrance doorway was a very indifferent painting which, though pointed out to me as King Charles, was certainly more like Cromwell—it is a sort of compromise between the two, and very suitable to the old place,

for by no means did the Royalists hold the house all through the Civil Wars, though they first garrisoned it. The Parliamentary army held the stronghold for some time under Lady Dynham, who at length was forced to seek flight by means of a subterranean passage under the moat; but after Fairfax had reduced it she again took up possession. We learn from Lady Fanshawe's memoirs that her (Lady Fanshawe's) husband passed through Boarstall as a prisoner after Worcester fight upon his way from Oxford up to London, and that Lady Dynham showed her sympathy and kindness of heart by offering him all the money she had in the house; but this he refused, though he willingly accepted some of her ladyship's shifts and handkerchiefs, for all the prisoners were in a ragged and woe-begone condition.

Further acquaintance with the somewhat eccentric old caretaker at Boarstall proved him to be a man of refinement. At first I took him to be a German by his peculiar accent, but he afterwards explained he came from Caermarthen. A lonely life it must be, to be immured in that solitary tower, half-dependent upon the sightseers who came that way (principally, I was told, from Oxford). The glimpse

I had had of the sad bereavement in his home, and his pathetic and anxious expression, left an impression not easily to be effaced. Certainly he was a character from whom Dickens might have drawn a powerful study.

CHAPTER XIV

ON the eastern border of Bucks a narrow strip of Hertfordshire projects to within about four miles of Aylesbury. Close to the border, and to the north-east of Tring, is the little village of Aldbury, situated in the midst of most picturesque scenery. Old-fashioned brick and timber cottages are scattered round an extensive green, in the midst of which is a large pond, and near the brink of the pond still stand the time-worn stocks and whipping-post. It is a more formidable-looking instrument of torture than most I have seen, and from its conspicuous position the unfortunate victims who did penance therein were open to assaults on all sides. On the high ground above the village is the extensive park of Ashridge, some five miles round, famous for its magnificent oak, ash, and beech-trees; famous, moreover, for its palatial mansion, a successor to an older one which was erected out of the ruins of a monastery. Alas! that this combination of Gothic

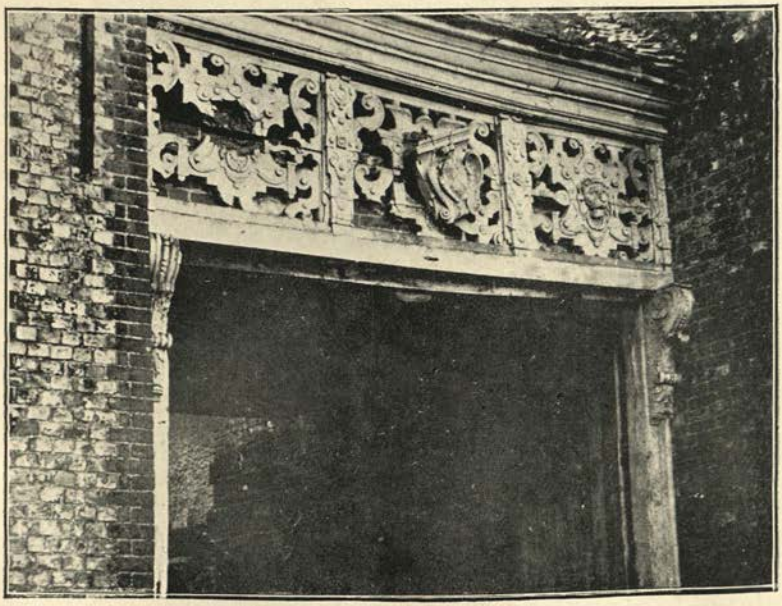
and Elizabethan architecture should have passed away.

Good Queen Bess, when she was Princess, frequently stopped here, and there is very substantial evidence to prove this is not one of those mythical places of her Majesty's sojourn, for there is still preserved an extraordinary collection of relics, including not only her bed, but her shoes and stockings and a complete toilet set, with two enormous hair-brushes which, if 'put upon poles, might well serve as brooms. How the Queen came to leave behind all her goods and chattels is accounted for by the fact that during her sojourn it was suspected she was implicated in Wyat's rebellion, so with more speed than ceremony she was taken from a sick bed and carried up to London. There is another relic which gives a pathetic side-light to a chapter in Froude. To quote the great historian, in April, 1555, Queen Mary "withdrew to Hampton Court for entire quiet. The rockers and the nurses were in readiness, and a cradle stood open to receive the Royal infant; priests and bishops sang litanies through the London streets; a procession of ecclesiastics in cloths of gold and tissue marched round Hampton Court Palace headed by Philip in

person; Gardner walked at his side, while Mary gazed from a window. Not only was the child assuredly coming, but its sex was decided on, and circulars were drawn and signed both by the King and Queen, with blanks also for the month and the day, announcing to ministers of State, to ambassadors, and to foreign sovereigns the birth of a prince. . . . The bells were set ringing in all the churches; *Te Deum* was sung in St. Paul's; priests wrote sermons; bonfires were piled ready for lighting, and tables were laid out in the streets. The news crossed the channel to Antwerp, and had grown in the transit. The great bell of the cathedral was rung for the actual birth."

The relic to which I refer is the baby-linen which was made by Princess Elizabeth for her rival sister upon this much-looked-forward-to occasion, which was fated to end in disappointment. More mementoes of Elizabeth may be seen in the old manor house of Little Gaddesden, close at hand. Here is a curious mural painting representing her and her suite. The principal figure (of the Queen), having been painted upon a cupboard door, afforded every excuse for its removal into the mansion; doubtless it will be better preserved there, but one

STOCKS, ALDBURY.



"WHITE HORSE INN," HOCKLIFFE.

cannot help regretting that it was taken from its original position.

Going northwards by Eddlesborough, in whose church there is a wonderfully fine fifteenth-century screen and canopy to the pulpit, a journey of about nine miles will bring us to Hockliffe, on the great main road to Coventry, and three miles to the north-east is Toddington. At the old manor house of the latter place—or, rather, the remains of it, for at one time it was one of the largest mansions in Bedfordshire—linger sad memories of the young heiress of the noble house of Wentworth. The fine old church is full of interest. There are recumbent effigies of knights in armour, and the roof is one of the finest in the county, with gracefully carved bosses, figures of angels, etc. A handsome but dilapidated monument to Lady Wentworth naturally enough is silent about the pathetic history of her liaison with the handsome Duke of Monmouth, who, at the time there was a warrant out for his arrest on the charge of high treason, remained for some months secreted at Toddington. But here, as elsewhere, he courted disaster, as well as his hostess. Lord Bruce, who lived in the neighbourhood, and fortunately was friendly disposed

towards the fugitive, recognised him at a local hunt in the garb of a gipsy, but kept a silent tongue in his head.

Two years after this, when the brief reign of Monmouth as King of Taunton was over and the headsman's axe had terminated his luckless career, the fatal news, being carried to Lady Wentworth, proved also her death-blow. One of the bishops who attended the Duke in his last moments had the heart-wrenching task of taking to her a memento in the shape of a ring which had been handed to him on the scaffold. At the sight of it the poor girl swooned, and upon regaining consciousness sobbed, "Good God, had that poor man nothing to think of but me?"[1] A month or so after this, and the bell of Toddington Church was tolling. The villagers had congregated to pay their last tribute of love and respect. But the past was not to be buried with the last earthly remains. Some evil-disposed person ascended the tower and cut the bell-ropes—in the hopes, perhaps, that by so doing the soul of the departed would not reach heaven! I fancy there is such a superstition.

The figure of a cupid on the monument stands

[1] *Vide King Monmouth.*

headless, as if symbolical of the unhappy love story, and the bust of the heroine of it has fallen and lies in pieces upon another tomb.

What remains of the mansion is interesting, but it is only a fragment. From some old documents, maps, and sketches preserved there, one may get a good idea of the original dimensions. On the back of an old fire-screen also there is a ground plan showing the part of the house which was set aside for Monmouth's use. This (retaining the original furniture) was kept locked up for years, while the remainder of the house was dismantled and tumbling to pieces, but it was eventually pulled down. Some of the oak carvings from Toddington Place were removed to Hockliffe, where they may still be seen incorporated in the "White Horse Inn"—an old hostelry where in years gone by there was a notice stuck up to the effect that its customers had the privilege of seeing the newspaper there *every day in the week!*

At the now ruinous Inigo Jones mansion of Houghton Conquest, a few miles to the north of Toddington, lived Lord Bruce, afterwards Earl of Ailesbury, who once upon a time was a suitor for the hand of the heiress of Toddington. It is

a picturesque pile of red brick of James I.'s time, with stone facings and classic arches and arcades, like the ruin of Slaugham Place in Sussex. A fine house it must have been, with the formal terraces and gardens, of which nothing is now visible in the surrounding meadow-land. Here Sir Philip Sidney is said to have written his *Arcadia*, for before the Earl of Ailesbury came into possession it was the property of Sir Philip's sister, the Countess of Pembroke. The arms and quarterings of the Sidneys formerly surmounted the main entrance, and their various monograms may still be seen upon a frieze. "It's been an old ancient place in its time," observed a farm labourer, who, hidden from view, had been watching my cautious manœuvres round some very shaky-looking walls. I agreed with him, though I thought by appearances it was *still* "an old ancient place." "Folks sometimes come and paint it," continued he, and he might have added, "Carve it as well," for there were deep-cut mementoes of the visits of the 'Arrys and 'Arriets of present and past generations. The gentleman was evidently thirsty —for there was nothing more accommodating than a disused pump, securely railed in, as if water were scarce in those parts—so I handed over twopence.

The allusion to Houghton ruins forming a good subject for the brush suggests to my mind the experiences of an artist friend who, revisiting one of his old haunts, told a cottager that he had painted his house some five years previously. "Sure, that ye didn't," said the yokel with some spirit; "nothing ain't been done to it this twenty year or more, and then it warn't painted, but whitewashed, 'cos the squire said that was good enough for a house o' the likes o' mine."

Not far from Houghton ruins stood the old castle of Ampthill, where Queen Catherine of Arragon lived in retirement previous to her trial.

Clophill and Silsoe are as poetic in appearance as their names sound. These pretty villages, which lie to the east of Ampthill, have a more prosperous look than the majority hereabouts, for the generality have a poverty-stricken look. This is perhaps owing to the proximity of the large estate, Wrest Park, in the same way that the village of Woburn, some miles to the west, owes its flourishing condition to the ducal house of Bedford. By the way, when I went through that extensive park some years ago, I was not aware that there is a kind of private Zoological Gardens kept on the premises. I met now and again

some most alarming-looking animals, who filled me with awe, but I presume they were tame, or they wouldn't be allowed to prowl about in that casual sort of way.

At Over and Lower Gravenhurst, to the west of Wrest Park, one may get an object-lesson respecting church restoration. The first thing that greets one upon entering the holy edifice of the latter village is a contribution box for funds, and, unkind as it may appear, I trust they will not be forthcoming, if one may judge of the impending havoc from the over-scraped and varnished church. Here, lying in a corner, I noticed the wreck of the old oak pulpit, and one of the original pews—the latter, the remnant of others which have been chopped up to be fitted here and there in the new seats. They have the appearance of being neither one thing nor the other. Whether funds would not admit of the roof being attacked, I do not know; but that, fortunately, has not been touched—a splendid roof, with great figures representing angels with extended wings, and beautifully moulded bosses at the intersections of the beams.

Far less pretentious is the other little unrestored church, with its original pews almost intact, a simple Decorated rood-screen, retaining in part its original

colouring, and the old pulpit. A monument to one Benjamin Pigott represents him, his three wives, and fourteen children—in various instalments. First comes a brass of Benjamin, then a wife, a child, another wife, four children, the third wife, and, finally, nine more children—a goodly array in all. Here also may be seen an hour-glass stand, which carries us back to the days when sermons were measured out to the parishioners according to the running sand. There are some churches that I know of where I believe this custom would be welcome if the glass was one of those modern ones—for boiling eggs.

Meppershall, a mile or so to the east, has also a good Cruciform church, in close proximity to which is the manor house, coated with yellow wash over possibly ornamental pargetting. Conspicuous on the gable over the porch is a large bas relief of a crown and thistle. I asked the inmate for information, which was not forthcoming. It was *supposed* to be the manor house, and the badge was *supposed* to be a crown and a thistle (which was evident on the face of it). Shillington was the next place on my programme. Here I was enforced to take things leisurely, for on my way my machine (I was cycling on this

journey) was incapacitated by a great plug of wood running completely through the tyre. A deliberate case of suicide, such as this, should properly have been buried at the next cross-roads, but I dragged the mangled remains onwards in the hope of finding a doctor. I have always noticed that the worst punctures usually happen in the most outlandish places, miles from the nearest railway, miles from help or sympathy. But I might have fared worse and been "hung up" entirely, for my outfit was far from equal to the occasion. At Shillington I discovered a bootmaker, who not only was accustomed to set people on their legs, but on their wheels. When I say "discovered," I mean I heard that such a person existed, but to find him was another matter, for his shop was locked up and he was—heaven knows where! In a rural district I usually find the people are callous, but here the whole population voluntarily went to scour the country.

Meanwhile I sauntered round the old church. From the distance as I approached the village, the church standing above the old thatched roofs looked more like some massive mediæval castle, and, silhouetted against the evening sky, it had a strange, romantic appearance. The key of the church,

as is usually the case, was kept some considerable distance away, but when at length I ran the lady in charge to earth, it was a satisfaction to learn that she could "always be found" in the same spot, which, alas! was not the case with the bootmaker. The key and the custodian could not be parted —an admirable plan where there are possibilities of tips—so the lady honoured me with her company. No sooner was the door open than some mysterious person, whom I had not noticed before, slipped in. Like myself, he was a stranger in the land, and, judging from appearances, wanted to see all that was to be seen—possibly gratis, for which I don't blame him. "A good brass," I ejaculated, half to myself and half to the lady in charge. The gentleman brought his eyes and nose to bear on the monument and exclaimed, "A treat!" I admired the old oak benches and the most graceful tracery of the screen. They were also "A treat!" I expect the view from the church tower was likewise, for he mounted the ladder to explore the heights while I remained below, and, preparing to depart, was reminded that *my friend* would not be long. This hastened my exit.

Upon my return to the shoemaker's shop I found

that the inhabitants of the village had returned, and that the object of their search was looming in the distance covered in dust and perspiration. Another quarter of an hour and I was speeding towards Hitchin, where I arrived just three minutes too late for the up express. It is the fashion to abuse that wonderful publication *Bradshaw*, but I think a cyclist on tour might do worse than carry one with him; occasionally it would save both time and anxiety. Much as *Bradshaw* is maligned, it is not nearly so exasperating as the official time-table books published by the various companies. You are in a hurry to get to a place and refer to the index, and find this sort of thing: *Muddleton*, pages 1, 3, 6, 7, 10, 14, 18, 23, 27, 35, 49, 51, 62, 63, 77, 81, 87, 90, 97, 105, 116, 123, 132, 143. It is years since I read that excellent parody, *A Guide to Bradshaw*, by Sir F. C. Burnand, and do not remember whether this system of indexing is commented upon, and if so, whether there is any suggestion how to alight upon the page that you want.

If a straight line were ruled from Shillington through Hitchin and continued to about the same distance on the other side of that bright little town, it would terminate at Aston Bury.

HOUGHTON CONQUEST.

ASTON BURY.

I visited this ghostly old manor house on a dreary winter's day some years ago; one of those mild, muggy days when the moisture is dripping from the skeleton trees, and everything is half-hidden in a shroud of white penetrating mist—a day of which the most pleasant part is the recollection of the various discomforts when one is seated by a bright fire in a cosy inn parlour at the termination of one's journey. To traverse ploughed fields on such a day means, of course, carrying the weight of half the field on your feet or leaving your boots behind in the mud; but it is wonderful what one will undergo for the sake of a short cut. I have a recollection of arriving at Aston enveloped in clay from head to foot. There is a village some miles to the north-west in the adjoining county called Barton-in-the-Clay, so why not call this place Aston-in-the-Clay—in the winter months, that is to say? Fortunately the manor house was empty, otherwise I never could have been admitted. The building stands bare and bleak (a portion only of the original Elizabethan house), and has some very good twisted chimneys. Inside are panelled rooms, Tudor doorways and fireplaces, and two remarkable carved staircases with giant tapering newels. The latter occupy the chief portion of the

house, excepting a long gallery over a hundred feet in length on the top story, stretching from one end of the building to the other. The weather, doubtless, had a good deal to do with it, but it looked far from a cheerful abode—one, moreover, calculated to arouse suspicion of uncanny forms lurking in the dark corners of the deserted chambers.

Knebworth, with its strange medley of turrets, pinnacles, chimneys, and griffins, and other Strawberry Hill Gothic embellishments, is not far off. It is difficult to imagine that the wing of the original quadrangular Tudor structure is encased in this curious but certainly picturesque exterior. The great hall, with its fine screen and open timber roof, arms and banners, is intact, as is also the portrait gallery. Here the Stuart period is well represented. Over the carved oak mantelpiece is a fine painting of the hard-featured Prince Rupert, with his natural son Dudley Bard, who, like his father, was distinguished for his valour. He was shot in storming a breach at the siege of Buda in 1686. Among the beauties are pretty Nell Gwyn, who here has dark brown hair, as we see her in the National Portrait Gallary. I presume she dyed her naturally fair tresses to suit the fashion, as the gentlemen of the

Court occasionally changed the colour of their wigs.

More fascinating is handsome Lucy Walter, whose large expressive eyes follow you wherever you go. This portrait is one of the finest I have seen from Lely's brush. One day I hope this great artist's work may be valued at its proper worth. No portrait painter had so many bad imitators, for he could not possibly have turned out a tenth part of the pictures attributed to him. Rubbish which would make Lely turn in his coffin is constantly being passed off as his work, and his name suffers in consequence. Though the popular painter had innumerable imitators and copyists, the fact is never recognised at an auction room. Is it likely? A beauty of Charles II.'s Court, if not signed by Mary Beale, *must* be by Lely, no matter how indifferent the artistic merit of the picture. Why do not the organisers of one-man exhibitions, such as we have had of Vandyck, Romney, Reynolds, etc., give us a representative collection of this old master? The everlasting interest in the Stuart period alone should make such an exhibition popular.

CHAPTER XV

NOT far from the retired little village of Tewin Green, to the south-east of Knebworth, stands Queen Hoo Hall (locally pronounced Queenie-'ooo), a curious red-brick Tudor house with ornamental pinnacles surmounting its two principal gables, lofty mullioned windows, and massive chimney-stacks. At the back is a little walled-in courtyard, and from this you enter the house over a doorstep of red bricks encased in a bordering of oak, like the hearths one occasionally sees in old houses, and by this primitive entrance Queen Elizabeth is traditionally said to have come upon the occasion of her visit, for she certainly honoured the house with her presence during one of her progresses. Most of the rooms have been stripped of the oak wainscoting with which they were covered not many years ago, but the old stone Tudor fireplaces remain, and there is also the original well staircase intact.

Carefully restored, this old place would make

a most charming residence, for it stands high and commands extensive views. It is now occupied as a farm, and house and garden appear to be in a most neglected condition. Over a fireplace in one of the upper rooms is a strange mural painting, the subject of which was a mystery. The costumes represented show it to be coeval with the house, but presumably the fresco was never finished, and a great portion of it is only in outline, or perhaps it was nearly obliterated in removing the coats of whitewash they were so lavish with about a hundred years ago. The principal figures in robes and ruffs are kneeling, but most conspicuous of all is the standing figure of a negro with a sort of club in his hand, bearing a strong resemblance to a Mother Gamp umbrella. The rooms were unusually dark and gloomy, as there was an impending thunder-storm when I was there. In a better light I might have arrived at a more satisfactory conclusion as to what the picture was all about. The angry appearance of the sky hastened my departure. For three hours before there had been brilliant sunshine, though when I had particularly wanted it earlier in the day for a snapshot, I had waited and waited in vain for a convenient gap in the clouds.

On arriving at Queen Hoo the black mantle had again obscured the sun, but this time it meant business. I put on speed for the nearest station, but down came the deluge before I was half-way there. With "buckets" coming down, trees afford not the least protection. Oh! for the Mother Gamp on the fresco. I can feel the rain coming through my hat, passing down my neck and filling my shoes even now. The prevailing impression of "Queenie-'ooo" is, as Mr. Mantalini would say, "a demmed damp moist unpleasant one."

Years before this expedition I had come out somewhere in these Hertfordshire wilds with my camera. Nowadays one may wander into the innermost corners of the earth with a detective camera and not be detected, or, in other words, not excite the least curiosity; but at the time I speak of the instrument was regarded with suspicion. As I was carrying the formidable apparatus of those days on my shoulder, I passed a farm labourer and his son. "Be 'e burd-catching, faather?" I overheard the boy address his sire. The father evidently knew better, for he approached and asked me to "take a draft" of his "dawg." Unwillingly I had to refuse, as I had exposed all my plates. This I tried to explain,

Queen Hoo.

but he only thought it was an evasion, for said he, "I don't mind giving yer sixpence, mister, if ye'll potograph 'im." I shook my head. "A shillin', then," he persisted, putting his hand in his pocket. I remained firm. "Well, ye ain't 'ard up for money, anyhow," he grumbled, as he trudged off, and even then father, son, and dog looked back occasionally in the hopes that I should change my mind.

Some of the most rustic country folk have a clever way of turning things to account. The inmate of an old cottage I once photographed near Dorking was a thorough business man. Yes, I might take "a likeness" of his house if I paid a shilling. I did so, and the worthy gentleman threw himself in for the money—posed in the porch—and remarked if I had half a dozen or so of the result to spare, I might give them to him!

In Tewin Church there are tombs to the Botelers, who once upon a time possessed both Aston Bury and Queen Hoo Hall. In the churchyard may be seen one of those tombs which have been lifted bodily from its position by the growth of a tree, or rather in this instance by several. Great branches of ash and sycamore have embraced the iron railings in such a way that they are wrenched

out of their positions. The usual story is told—that it is the grave of an unbeliever, which, I think, doesn't go for much, as these discoveries are never made until a century or so after the person's interment.

In a ramble of some fifteen miles from Tewin one may include the historic mansions of Hatfield, Tittenhanger, the Grove, Cassiobury, and Gorhambury (at the last of which resided the occupant of the Tewin tomb—viz., Lady Anne Grimston). Hatfield, of course, is one of the most perfect Elizabethan mansions extant, and its art treasures are world-famed. Vastly interesting as are these, as at Chatsworth one comes away with the predominant impression of the beauty of the delightful old gardens, groves, and avenues. Even over two and a half centuries ago Evelyn came away with the same impression, as did Pepys (in 1661), who admired, above all, the gardens, "such," says he, "as I never saw in all my life." But in his rounds there was also a pretty little dog which he admired, and, with extraordinary candour, he says, "I would fain have stolen—but I could not, which troubled me." The approach to the old vineyard by the quaintest of yew avenues, with branches interlaced into a

thousand arches, with sloping terraces down to the river, is quite unique. The Elizabethan garden, the Jacobean garden, and the Privy garden also have each of them their distinct beauties and characteristics.

Like Hatfield, Tittenhanger contains some superb art treasures. It is a queer-looking red-brick Jacobean house with tall French château-like roof. Among the miniatures here is a very beautiful one of Lady Castlemaine by Cooper, in which that lady's usual self-consciousness and imperious expression is entirely absent. I may note for those who are interested in such matters that there is a replica of this miniature in the Propert collection, but it is misnamed La Vallière. Their features were not unlike—the eyes in particular, which had that dreamy expression which half the ladies of the Court tried to imitate.

At Gorhambury, Cassiobury, and the Grove (Watford) one may study the faces of nearly all the celebrities and notorieties of the seventeenth century, as well as characters who only figure in the sidelights of history. Among the latter is Mrs. Hyde, the old widow lady who concealed Charles II. upon his hazardous flight from Worcester. This stern old lady, as she peers out of her circular frame at the Grove, looks as if she could keep a secret.

Those who were ignorant of the rank of her guest surely must have been scandalised by this good widow's assiduous attentions to the pseudo serving-man, whose health she could not refrain from drinking in a special bumper. Of more romantic interest is a full-length in armour of the handsome, weak, and superstitious son of the possessor of those life-like eyes which follow us up and down the picture gallery at Knebworth. At his side stands another figure, with a rather sinister expression, who points with his finger to a spot on the globe, perhaps to the south coast of England, towards which the Duke was shortly to set sail from Amsterdam. Monmouth looks gloomy; perhaps he is weighing in his mind a visionary crown against the peaceful bliss of his secluded retreat at picturesque Gouda. But gloomier still is his face at Cassiobury, which was painted just a couple of years before the final scene on Tower Hill. It is difficult to realise that it is the melancholy maturity of the "vaulting, leaping, clambering" youth who was the liveliest figure in the liveliest of courts.[1] In the same year that this portrait was painted, a detachment of soldiers under Colonel Oglethorp arrived at the house where it

[1] *Vide King Monmouth.*

hangs to arrest the owner for his share in the Rye House Plot. He had sought refuge in flight, and was occupied at his favourite hobby, devising and planting the present picturesque walks and avenues. Essex received the Colonel courteously, took him round the grounds, and refreshed him with the fruit for which Cassiobury was, and is still, famous. How the Earl evaded the headsman by committing suicide in the Tower (which act was one of the many misdeeds afterwards put down to James's account) need not be detailed here.

Gorhambury, like Cassiobury, is architectually not attractive to the antiquarian, but the pictures are exceptionally fine. Here is the best portrait I have ever seen of George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham, by Mytens. Hilliard's portrait of the Virgin Queen was given by her august Majesty to her host, Lord Chancellor Bacon, upon the occasion of one of her visits. The collection at the Grove is rich in Vandycks, and there are many good Lelys and Knellers.

But enough of pictures. Let us follow the boundary line between Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Middlesex. Considering the proximity to London, the country is still wonderfully primitive

hereabouts. Around Sarratt and Chipperfield, to the north of Rickmansworth, there are some queer old cottages, and the scenery, particularly near the latter village and common, is exceedingly beautiful. The scanty population of the neighbourhood, I think, would not induce a railway to go in that direction, but lower down in the route I am taking, that wonderful invention, the "steam navvy," is rapidly cutting a way through the hills, and Beaconsfield is to be brought in direct communication with London.

The village of Sarratt may have been pretty some years ago, but ugly modern buildings round the green have sprung up and spoiled its primitive character; in the centre of the green, moreover, there is a hideous iron well or pump, which looks more like a gigantic knife-cleaning machine than anything else. I think even a Jubilee clock-tower would not be such an eyesore. Near the village there is a famous haunted house, which is mentioned in Mrs. Crowe's *Night Side of Nature*. The ghostly visitor is said to be a headless man in a blue coat, with brass buttons. Whether he wears other garments I do not know, but they are not specified. A guest who was stopping at the house, to whom the spectre appeared, knew

nothing of the visitations before he gained his own experience. He had retired to rest and dropped off to sleep in the ordinary way, when he was awakened by an extraordinary pressure on his feet. Probably "blue-coat" had been sitting on them, for on opening his eyes he observed a stooping figure supporting himself by the bed-clothes at the foot of the bed, in the act of picking up something —his head, presumably, for that was missing from his shoulders. This he must have found, for he soon made his exit through a locked door. Meanwhile the spectator had not lost *his* head, but kept on the alert for another appearance; nothing further, however, happened. Under the circumstances, it is hardly to be wondered that the guest at the house did not accept a pressing invitation to continue his visit. A little of that sort of thing goes a long way, and I for one would go a considerable distance to evade a headless man.

A friend of mine was once invited to spend a night in the well-known haunted chamber at Raynham Hall, in Norfolk. He accepted it, but by all accounts he did not have a very enjoyable time of it. It was a gusty winter's night, and all kinds of unaccountable noises kept his

nerves strung up to concert pitch. The notorious "brown lady" (said to be the ghost of Scott's *Tapestried Chamber*), fortunately for my friend, was conspicuous by her absence. The sight of his own haggard face in one of those tall Queen Anne mirrors immediately opposite the bed was quite bad enough. Morning dawned, but instead of the occupant of the haunted chamber coming down to breakfast with "hair turned white in a single night," I understand he sat down complacently to a very hearty meal, and has since dubbed spectral ladies, whether they be brown, black, white, or green, as "all tommy-rot!"

Some years ago, in exploring this part of Hertfordshire, I was severely handicapped, for all the names of the signposts for miles around had been painted out. Presumably the man who was renovating them, went his rounds until his white paint was exhausted, and then made a fresh start with his black paint; but as this was a matter of time, the unfortunate traveller meanwhile was left to his own resources. At one place where there were three roads a local wit had stepped in with some red paint and filled in the names—"To Heaven," "To Purgatory," and "To ——" the other place. But that was better

than the work of some malicious person who upon one of my wanderings had turned a loose signpost round. Arriving at a village about five miles from this signpost, I discovered to my dismay that I was exactly ten miles in the opposite direction from where I should have been.

Not many miles to the east of Sarratt is the village of Harefield, in parts of which one might imagine oneself to be a couple of hundred miles from the metropolis instead of only some seventeen miles from it. In and about the village green ugly rows of labourers' cottages have sprung up within the last few years, which give the place a squalid appearance, but on the Uxbridge side the country is wonderfully primitive and untouched. The picturesque gabled almshouses, with their tall chimneys, stand high above the church and site of Harefield Place. Until the year of the Restoration, when this historical mansion was burned to the ground (owing, it is said, to the carelessness of that disreputable poet and courtier, Sir Charles Sedley, reading in bed), Harefield Place was one of the finest houses in Middlesex. The Virgin Queen was entertained here for three days when, by some accounts, *Othello* was performed before her Majesty, for which the company

received £64 18*s.* 10*d.*, which, even taking into account the value of money at that time, was not lavish pay. I fear the London stars of to-day would think twice before they journeyed down to Harefield at the same rate of remuneration. Upon this occasion it has been surmised that Shakespeare was present, but of this there is no proof, neither is there any documentary evidence to support the statement that the entertainment selected was nothing more cheerful than the dismal tragedy; in fact, the above-mentioned expenses include the "vaulters and dancers," [1] and I doubt whether Othello, Iago, or Desdemona, or any other of the characters of the play, did much in that way. That Milton used to visit Harefield there is no doubt, nor that his *Arcades* was performed there before the fifth Countess of Derby, whose gorgeous dome-canopied monument, surmounted by the Stanley arms, stands in the chancel of the church.

The first thing that strikes one upon entering the holy edifice is its wealth of seventeenth-century monuments, and their rich colouring. These give the church a highly decorative and very picturesque appearance, and though some

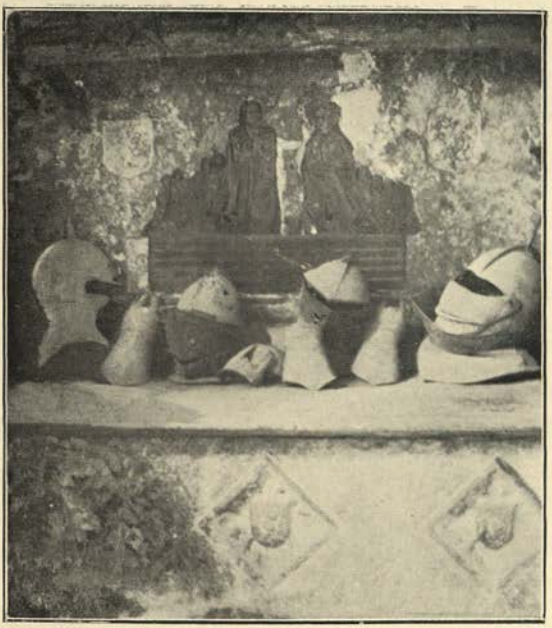
[1] *Vide Greater London*, vol. i. p. 245.

of the fittings are late and not architecturally beautiful, the effect of the whole, and the blending of Jacobean and Georgian woodwork, has a quaint and fanciful charm about it. It is just the sort of church one associates with the early days of David Copperfield. By all appearances the generation of restorers who were last called in are extinct. The "three-decker" and the great high-backed pews of one or two distinguished families recall the days when our grandfathers used to go to church, though perhaps they may, like these isolated boxes, have been few and far between. The largest pew still retains three enormous cushions, upon which formerly rested three equally enormous prayer books of ancient date; they are meaningless now, but there is still a manorial dignity about them. The elaborately carved semi-circular altar-rail savours of the handiwork of "Sir Grundling Gubbings," as I once heard the artist named. There is also a range of stalls, a rusty array of helmets, and some very good brasses to the Newdigate and Ashby families, etc.

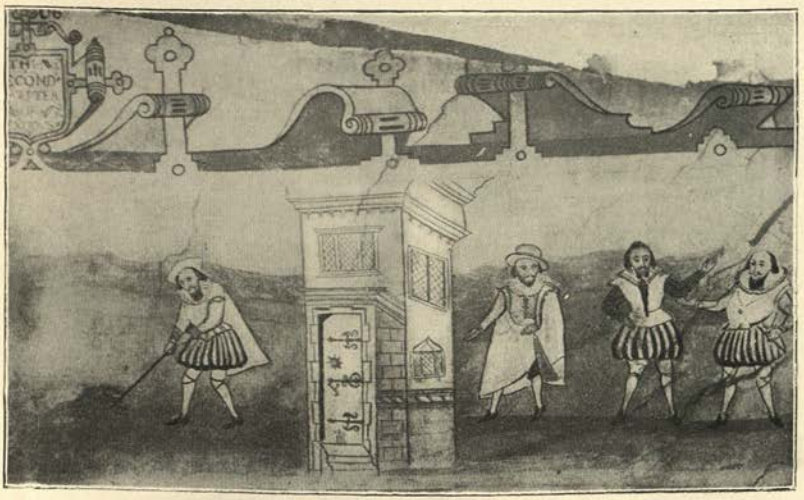
Harefield Place stood at the back of the church, where may be seen a remnant of the stables of the mansion which succeeded it, and also some of the

old garden walls. Of Moor Hall and its adjacent Early English chapel there are considerable remains. The house externally is nothing more than a picturesque cottage (or cottages, for it is divided into two), but the original Gothic roof is intact, though it is risky to one's life, not to mention one's clothes, to obtain a view of it. I was personally conducted on a tour—or, rather, crawl—round these upper regions by an enthusiast in such matters—one of those hazardous journeys such as Dante made, where a wrong step taken would be disastrous. There being but a small candle as an illuminant, I once or twice nearly "put my foot in it"—viz., not the candle, but the plaster between the joists, and had I done so I should have descended into the lower regions with more speed than ceremony. There is also a good fireplace, not painted white, as is usual, but black.

Nearer to Denham, and close by the pretty Colne, is "The Savoy," a charming and secluded old farmstead surrounded by the sweetest of gardens. Little streamlets run here and there through the grounds, crossed by little rustic bridges. In the summer the banks of the river are one mass of roses, which hang in festoons in all directions,



HELMETS AT HAREFIELD.



FRESCO AT "THE SAVOY."

and fill the air with their sweet perfume. Inside the house are dark-panelled rooms, with ceilings of ponderous beams, a fine old staircase, and all kinds of rambling corridors. Some very curious mural paintings in one of the bedrooms represent incidents from the second chapter of Exodus. The costumes are somewhat incongruous, but give one a capital idea of the mode of dress of the early part of James I.'s reign. The colours, though rather crude, are as vivid and fresh as when they were first laid on. Moses burying the Egyptian is in an attitude strangely suggestive of a game of golf. The accompanying landscape is scarcely so realistic: the blue of the sky and the perspective are the artist's weak points. A vanishing point of a queer-looking structure is centred in the spectator, and if followed in the opposite direction would lead one into everlasting space. Three sides of the room are covered by similar paintings, but for many years they have been partially concealed by wallpaper, and I understand this is shortly to be removed.

The village of Denham is an ideal one, full of pretty timber and red-brick cottages, upon many of which cling graceful creepers, and there is a gigantic wisteria covering the front of the old inn, which

is quite a picture in the summer. Beyond this are the rounded gables of a compact little late Jacobean house, and farther still the grey church tower may be seen enbosomed in trees. Among the old monuments in the church are some to the family of Peckham, to whose house, the predecessor of Denham Place, fugitive priests used to resort in the days of religious persecution. Denham Court preserves an erroneous tradition that Charles II. was concealed there by Lady Bowyer (who was a Weld in her maiden days). Some panel pictures here are in some unaccountable way connected with the tradition; but far from representing any episodes in the King's escape, they appear to be merely pastoral scenes and studies in still life. Besides a few old windows, there is nothing to carry us back to the seventeenth century.

Between the house and the church is a magnificent avenue, indeed avenues of aged elms line the roads in all directions, and on the outskirts of the village is one of those time-mellowed red-brick garden walls which suggest the proximity of a good old house within. This is Denham Place, which was built in Charles II.'s reign—a peaceful-looking house, with an air of ancestral dignity about

it. The interior is quite in keeping. One old tapestried room has a remarkable frieze representing houses, castles, churches, and windmills in vivid colours and bold relief. There is also an old chapel full of richly gilt linen panelling. Near the house stretches a wide reach of the picturesque weed-grown river—an ideal spot to lounge away an hour on a hot summer day, for one fortunately may enjoy this pretty spot from the high road. The village pound, not far away, has been cleverly converted into a fowl-run for an adjacent cottage; but such premature arrangements will soon disappear, for close by the new railway line is being constructed, and a few years hence the pervading peace and harmony of Denham will, I fear, be destroyed for ever. Rows of jerry-built eyesores will spring up like toadstools to destroy the scene. But sufficient for the day is the evil thereof; let us enjoy the rural bliss while it lasts. Denham is fortunate in the possession of a learned antiquarian as rector. I had the privilege of looking at an exhaustive manuscript compilation by him on the history of the parish—one of the most complete of its kind, I should say, that has ever been put together.

If space but permitted, I should like to linger

at many of the old houses in the vicinity of Uxbridge —at Swakeleys, near Ickenham, for instance, which is much the same as it was when Pepys was there in 1665, though the mummified black boy which the owner of the house of those days prepared in his own oven (!) is now missing. The King sent the diarist to Swakeleys to probe the extent and accessibility of the Lord Mayor's privy purse, who pleaded poverty, which is scarcely to be wondered at. The screen in the great hall was erected by Sir James Harrington, one of the judges who passed sentence upon Charles I. "Pretty to see over the screene of the hall," says Pepys, "the King's head and my Lord of Essex on one side, and Fairfax on the other, and upon the other side of the screene the parson of the parish and the lord of the manor and his sisters."

One of the most picturesque old houses anywhere hereabouts is the Cedar House at Hillingdon—a peep of it that you get from the road, with the giant arms of the ancient tree which gives the name sweeping the lawn, makes a delightful picture. The interior is rich in linen-fold panelling, and there are ancient oak chests, cabinets, and tables of all descriptions, not to mention a good collection of arms and armour, and some superb heraldic glass. To live in

CEDAR HOUSE, HILLINGDON.

SWAKELEYS.

these old rooms is to live in the past, and one has but to sit in the ample ingle-nook of the hall and watch the reflection of the blazing logs dancing upon a steel-clad warrior lurking in a dark corner opposite to imagine that the spark of life had materialised out of the red-hot embers, and that the mystic owner of the Castle of Otranto on a miniature scale was contemplating a ramble round the premises. Here again we are on historical ground, for at Hillingdon, Charles I., subsequent to his escape from Oxford in 1646, determined after much indecision to turn his steps northwards, instead of boldly showing himself among the citizens of London, which at that critical time certainly would have been the wiser plan. But the man who hesitates is lost, and so it was with the unfortunate King. The inn where he halted to consider the weighty possibilities of life and death is still *in situ*, but it has been much restored from time to time, so that one can get but a very hazy impression of what the building was like as it stood in the middle of the seventeenth century.

CHAPTER XVI

SUPPOSE we now journey into the north-east corner of Hertfordshire, and work our way thence into parts of Essex.

I have a remarkably vivid impression of the road between the village of Barkway and Newsells House, to the south-east of Royston. Vivid, however, is hardly the name—a lightning impression in this case would perhaps better convey my meaning ; for when I was a youngster, in an ill-advised moment I was persuaded to take a mount upon a very spirited mare named "Flash o' Light;" and a most appropriate name it proved to be, for no sooner was I seated than off the animal dashed as if bound for the winning-post on the Epsom course. My riding experiences hitherto had been confined to the donkeys on Hampstead Heath, so it is needless to state my experience was a novel one. Reins and stirrups vanished in a moment, and holding on, I might say, by *main* force, my body was making prodigious

bounds in the air. Each contact with the saddle was like an earthquake. Presently a five-barred gate loomed at the end of a beech avenue, and I gave myself up for lost, but my steed did not take it in the same light that I anticipated—quite the reverse. She pulled up dead, and off I went spinning in a double somersault that would have brought down the house at a country circus. But oh! the relief to be off the back of that fiery mare even in such an unceremonious fashion!

In those days the occupant of Newsells was the military commander who sits astride another of his "Flashes o' Light" at the corner of Knightsbridge and Sloane Street. A soldier to the backbone, his lordship lived a kind of rigid camp life, and, though an octogenarian, would work from sunrise—not till sunset—but midnight. I have sat writing out speeches about the Long and Short Service until my head reeled and I became convinced that the latter term was most assuredly the best for a private secretary under a military commander.

Yes; I could recount many strange impressions of my experiences at Newsells. The mansion is old, but not architecturally beautiful, and though many of the rooms point to the reign of good Queen Anne, some

of them date back to an earlier period. The family of Scales was seated at Newsells for centuries since the year 1250. By a strange coincidence, when I was there the name of the housekeeper was Scales—possibly the wife of a descendant of the original stock. The best part about the estate is the park, which has lovely beech avenues right round its boundary. Many a solitary walk have I taken in the late autumn beneath those stately trees, enjoying the gorgeous colours overhead and the fascinating crackling beneath one's feet of the dead leaves of other autumns—disturbing the colony of rooks aloft and the *al fresco* assemblies of rabbits below. But one is apt to grow prosy in recounting these things.

About nine miles (as the crow flies) due east of Newsells stands the ancestral mansion of Audley End, which, though but a portion of the original house, proved even too big for a regal palace. In some respects the house is like Hatfield, externally and internally—the great hall in particular. Some of the finest ornamental ceilings in England may be seen here, and one of the most striking features of the mansion is a beautifully carved Early Jacobean staircase with a succession of lofty pillars forming a continuous arcade. When Pepys was there, he was impressed

with these things more or less, but the cellars were more to his taste, the contents of which he sampled with entire satisfaction. As the Merry Monarch kept Court here it is quite in keeping to find many fine portraits of the period. Upon one occasion during the sojourn of royalty, the Queen and the Duchesses of Richmond and Buckingham went in disguise to the fair at Newport (some three miles away), disguised as country damsels, and riding pillion behind three gentlemen. "They had all so overdone it in their disguise," says a contemporary account, "and looked so much more like antiques than country folk, that as soon as they came to the fair the people began to go after them; but the Queen, going to a booth, to buy a pair of yellow stockings for her sweetheart, and Sir Bernard [one of the gentlemen] asking for a pair of gloves stitched with blue for his sweetheart, they were soon, by their gibberish, found to be strangers, which drew a bigger flock about them. One amongst them had seen the Queen at dinner, knew her, and was proud of her knowledge. This soon brought all the fair into a crowd to stare at the Queen. Being thus discovered, they, as soon as they could, got to their horses; but as many of the fair as had horses got up, with their wives,

children, sweethearts, or neighbours behind them, to get as much gape as they could till they brought them to the court gate. Thus by ill conduct was a merry frolic turned into a penance."[1]

One of Nell Gwyn's reputed residences is at Newport—a long house with a hooded doorway. It is covered with ornamental pargetting, upon which is a bas-relief of a crown. In the High Street is a more interesting brick and timber house with a fine Tudor oriel window, bearing upon it some grotesque wooden carvings. The church has a fine rood-screen and some good stalls and brasses.

Of the old house of Braddocks, near Wimbish, and its resources for hiding priests in the days of religious persecution, I have spoken at length elsewhere.[2]

Thaxted, about seven miles from Newport, is the queerest old town imaginable. In the centre of the market place stands the Moot Hall with overhanging stories and pillar supports. This contains "The Cage," or lock-up like at "The Tollsey" at Burford. Here a couple of primitive-looking implements or elongated pitch-forks are still kept handy for pulling off the thatched roofs

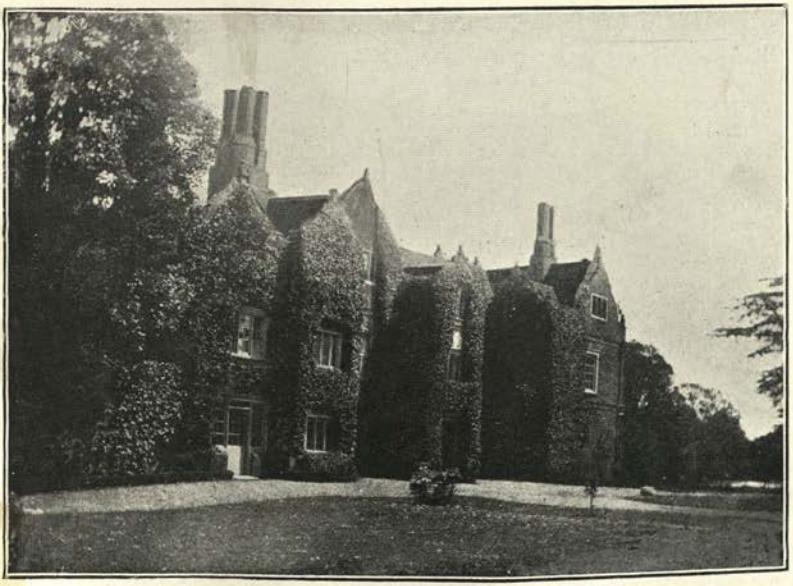
[1] Ives' *Select Papers*, p. 39.

[2] See *Secret Chambers and Hiding-Places.*

OLD HOUSE, NEWPORT.

NELL GWYN'S HOUSE, NEWPORT

LITTLE HADHAM HALL.



SPAINS HALL.

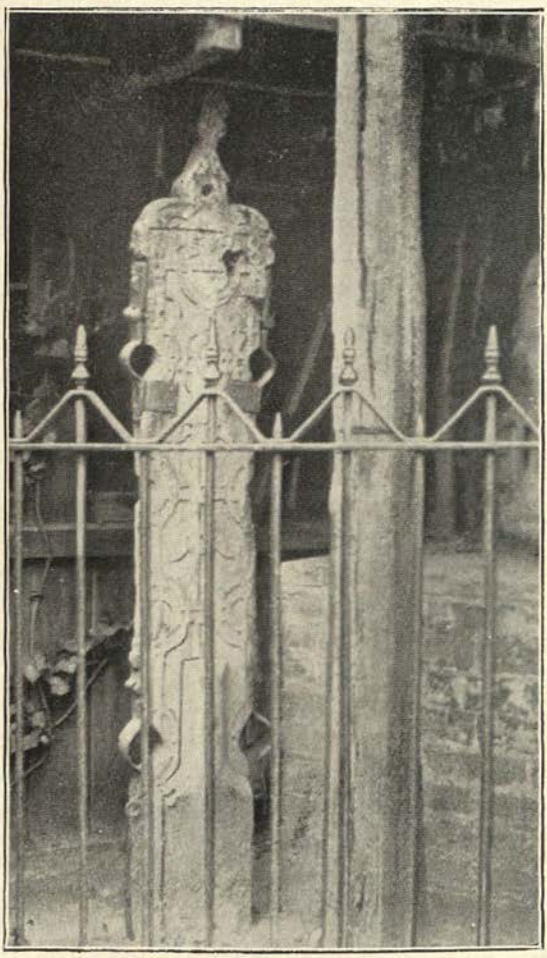
of houses in the case of a fire. The cathedral-like Cruciform church is the finest in the county. The exterior is very ornamental, with canopied niches and graceful pinnacles, and a noble assembly of gargoyles pulling all kinds of extraordinary grimaces. In the interior is much carved oak, especially about the ceiling, which is one of the best in Essex. In place of the old seats are rows of chairs which, though they add to the cathedral effect, give the whole a modern appearance.

A mile or so away is Horeham Hall, a good but rather too much restored mansion with step gables and twisted chimneys. I prefer the smaller house of Little Hadham, a fine old house with hexagonal towers to the west of Bishop's Stortford, which altogether has been less tampered with. Here lived that gallant Royalist, Lord Capel, who, after the surrender of Colchester in 1648, although his safety was guaranteed by Fairfax, soon followed his companions, Sir Charles Lucas and Sir George Lisle, to the grave. Some fifty years after his execution, when his descendants removed from their old seat to Cassiobury, a silver casket was discovered containing the heart of the cavalier, with instructions that it should be presented to Charles II. if he should

ever come to the throne as a testimony of his attachment to the Royal cause.

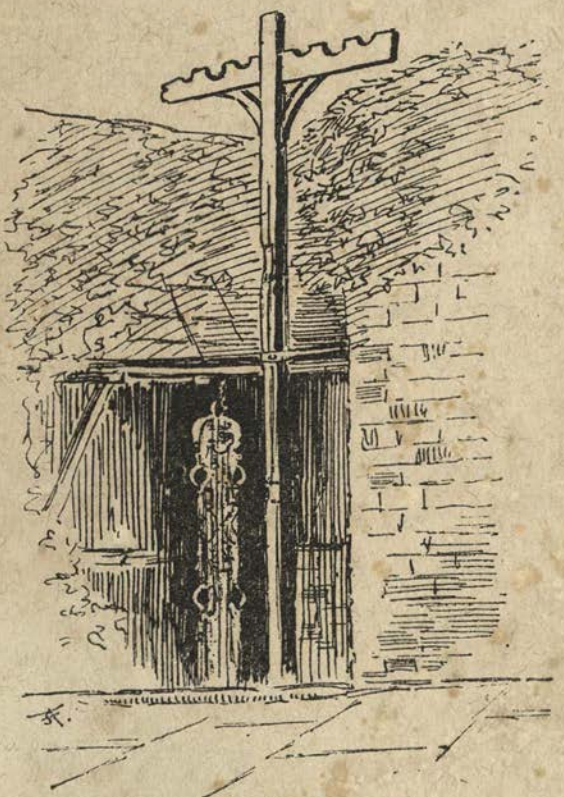
Spain's Hall and Moyns, away to the north-east of Thaxted, are both fine Elizabethan mansions. The former is a little too much mantled in ivy to show the beauty of its architectural details. The tomb of one of the Kemps who once lived at Spain's states that he was voluntarily silent for seven years. It is an out-of-the-way place—even nowadays some eight or nine miles from the railway—so possibly there was nobody to speak to two or three centuries back. But I forgot: Mr. Kemp had a wife. How then? Perhaps they were competitors for the flitch at neighbouring Dunmow, and that was the only way to secure it. Now, had the tomb specified that Mrs. Kemp was silent for seven years, that, indeed, would have been one of the seven wonders of the world!

At High and Good Easter, to the south of Dunmow, we are again miles from anywhere. The inhabitants of the latter village cannot have all been immaculate, for the local authorities had to erect a whipping-post. Though comparatively modern, it is not unlike one I remember to have seen at Waltham Cross—a carved one of the time of



WHIPPING POST, WALTHAM CROSS

Elizabeth, which, to my grief, I hear has been stolen. Fortunately I had photographed it. This and the pillory (one of the very few examples remaining)



Pillory, Waltham Cross.

formerly stood in the market square, but they had been removed and fenced in by iron rails. I believe the pillory still remains.

Little Leighs Priory, to the north-east of the

Easters, includes a beautiful red-brick quadrangular Tudor gateway, with stone mullioned windows and ornamented chimneys. One would like to see this old place restored with care to its pristine glory; it is well worth it, and the interior contains a lot of good linen panelling.

The historic mansion, New Hall, near Chelmsford, for many years past has been a nunnery. It is to be hoped the interior has not been altered, as I hear has been the fate of that of Rawdon House, at Hoddesdon (also now a nunnery)—where I remember to have seen some magnificent oak carvings—or Littleberries, at Mill Hill (Hendon)—another of the reputed residences of Nell Gwyn, where, before it became a religious establishment, I have seen very fantastical mural decorations, panel paintings, oak carvings, etc. The Villiers, first and second Dukes of Buckingham, and the Monks, first and second Dukes of Albemarle, lived at New Hall in great splendour, and before them it was an occasional Royal residence of Henry VIII. (who became possessed of it through his father-in-law, Sir Thomas Boleyn, of Hever Castle and Rochford Hall in Essex), Mary, and Elizabeth. We get a good peep of the mansion as it appeared in the year 1656 from Evelyn. "I

LITTLE LEIGHS PRIORY.

MOYNS.

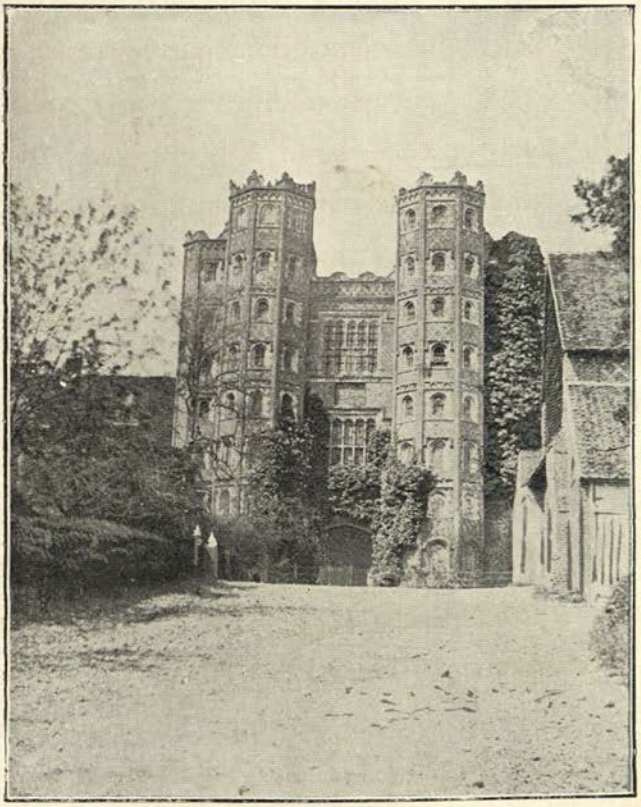
return'd homeward," says that diarist, "passing againe thro' Colchester; and by the way, neere the antient towne of Chelmsford, saw New Hall, built in a parke by Henry 7 and 8, and given by Queen Elizabeth to the Earle of Sussex, who sold it to the late greate Duke of Buckingham, and since seiz'd on by O. Cromwell (pretended Protector). It is a faire old house built with brick, low, being only of 2 stories, as the manner then was; the gatehouse better; the court large and pretty; the staire-case of extraordinary widnesse, with a piece representing Sir F. Drake's action in the year 1580, an excellent sea-piece; the galleries are trifling; the hall is noble; the gardens a faire plot, and the whole seate well accommodated with water; but above all I admir'd the faire avenue planted with stately lime-trees in 4 rowes for neere a mile in length. It has three descents, which is the only fault, and may be reform'd. There is another faire walk of the same at the mall and wildernesse, with a tennis court and pleasant terrace towards the park, which was well stor'd with deere and ponds."[1]

There is an old house at Blackmore, some miles to the south-west of New Hall in the direction of

[1] Evelyn's *Diary*, July 10th, 1656.

Ongar, called Jericho House, where, according to tradition, the much-married monarch (or "professional widower" as a schoolboy called him), when at his Essex palace, used to keep a supplementary reserve of would-be wives; and when the King's whereabouts were not known, the expression that he had "gone to Jericho" had scarcely the vague meaning that it has nowadays. Another house with a reputation about as good, or bad, as Jericho, was Killigrews, at Margaretting, on the other side of Ingatestone, but this has been pulled down long since.

Another Essex mansion, once of almost equal importance to New Hall, was Layer Marney, of which the graceful tower remains—a remarkable example of Early Tudor brickwork, with terra-cotta mouldings. The church close by contains some grand old monuments to the Lords Marney, a screen, curious frescoes, and good carvings in the pulpit and pews. The village inn of Feering, to the north-west, could formerly boast of one of the finest panelled rooms in Essex, but now all the oak carvings are gone, I know not whither. An equally beautiful room may still be seen at the moated manor house of Tolleshunt D'Arcy, to the south of Layer Marney. The other two Tolleshunts—Major



LAYER MARNEY.

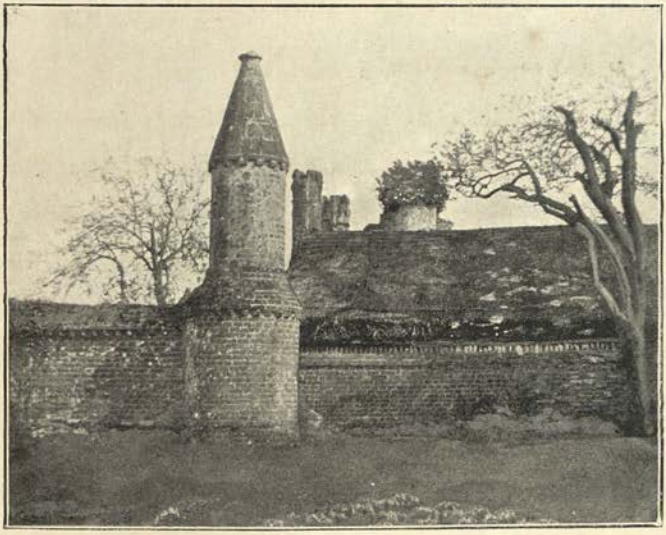
and Knights—are queer, out-of-the-world places. At the former stand the walls and tower of Beckington Hall, a grim fragment of mediæval architecture with singular extinguisher turrets. In the village of Tolleshunt D'Arcy is a maypole, but I do not know whether the good folk there turn out in overcoats and shawls to foot it on the first of May, for my experience of the early part of "the merry month" is not inviting, though to dance round the maypole would be a good excuse for getting up one's circulation when biting east winds are rampant. I believe until the last—to the bitter end, we might call it—the custom was kept up at Aldermaston, near Reading. I say to the last, for the tapering gilt-ball-surmounted maypole that I saw there a few years back has fallen a victim to one of the many gales it had weathered. The pretty village of Ickwell, in Bedfordshire, still retains its lofty maypole, as well as the custom of dancing around it in due form, and I trust it may still survive in the present century.

Before bringing these casual wanderings to a close, a word must be said about Eastbury and Belhus. The first of these can scarcely be said to be off the beaten track, for it stands close to the railway line, near the busy and densely populated

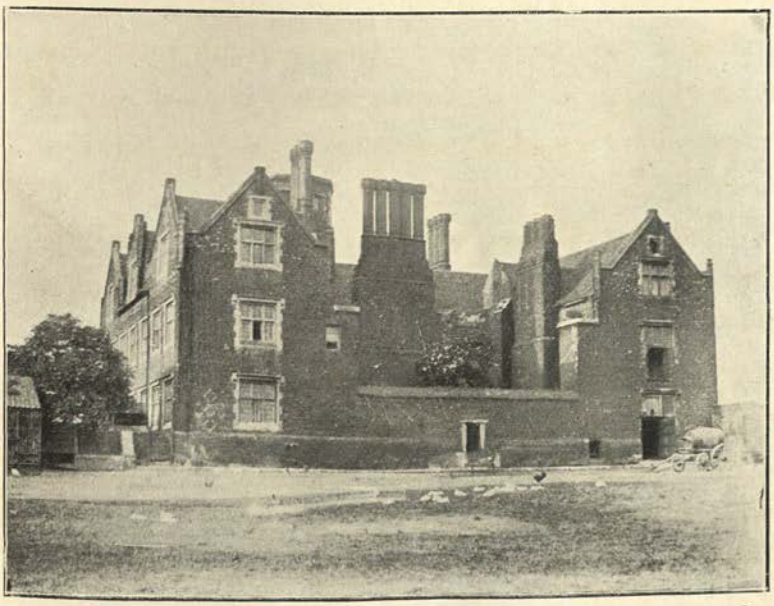
suburb of Barking. This extensive Elizabethan mansion has three sides of a quadrangle and one of its towers intact—that is to say, as far as the outside is concerned, for the interior has been stripped of all its fittings, and the greater part of the rooms are untenanted. Here, according to tradition, Lord Monteagle received the anonymous letter, as is supposed, from his sister-in-law, Mrs. Abingdon, of Hindlip Hall, In Worcestershire.[1] Other accounts say that Eastbury was a meeting-place of the plotters, which is also possible, for there is no actual proof that this house was Monteagle's residence at Barking. The unpicturesque surroundings, I fear, will prevent this fine old building from ever being occupied other than as a farm-house.

Belhus (about the same distance from the Thames, but lower down in the direction of Purfleet) stands in the midst of an extensive park. This also is a fine old Tudor structure. It is earlier in date than Eastbury, but has been somewhat spoiled by Strawberry Hill Gothic embellishments; many of the rooms are, however, little altered, and the walls are lined with the original tapestry and

[1] *Vide Secret Chambers.*



BECKINGTON.



EASTBURY HOUSE.

silken hangings, and numerous interesting portraits. The name of Lennard, Lord Dacre, is an important one, as may be judged from a prodigious pedigree on vellum, which only brings us as far as the sixteenth century. It was owing to the extravagance of Thomas, Lord Dacre, Earl of Sussex, that the fine old mansion, Hurstmontceux, was sold, and afterwards allowed to fall into ruin. Doubtless the beautiful Countess had her share in bringing about these monetary difficulties, for she inherited a taste for luxurious living both from her mother, the Duchess of Cleveland, and her (reputed) Royal father.

On the wall of the great staircase at Belhus hang side by side the portraits of this ill-assorted pair, who in their lifetime were seldom seen together. Married at the ages of thirteen and fourteen, they soon drifted apart. The husband naturally enough objected to the company into which his wife was thrown in the society of that lively Italian beauty, the notorious Duchess of Mazarin, who, to win the good graces (not that her good looks went against her, for that matter) of the Countess's august father, took the young lady under her wing. A scribe interested in the chit-chat of the day, records, among the other madcap freaks of these two ladies, that

"they went downe into St. James Parke the other day with drawne swords under their night gownes, which they drew out and made severall fine passes with to the admiration of severall men that was lookers on in the Parke." At length the Earl's flighty spouse was placed under strict supervision in a nunnery at Paris, where she may have amused herself, as did her boon companion when similarly situated, by pouring water through the floor-boards of her room upon the beds of the unfortunate nuns beneath. The Countess of Sussex on obtaining her liberty returned to her husband, but the reunion was only temporary; they lived and died apart, the Earl at Chevening (which in those days did not belong to the Stanhopes), the Countess at Linsted, the quaint old village I have mentioned in the early pages of this book.

In the drawing-room at Belhus is one of the finest portraits I have ever seen of James II. Arrayed in a gorgeous suit of steel inlaid with gold, the abdicated monarch, old, worn, and haggard, looks as if his mind was dwelling upon his misfortunes. Poor James! Will any writer ever spare him a coat of whitewash, for surely, with all his faults, he was not worse than Judge Jeffreys?

Among the numerous curiosities of the seventeenth century are casques, breastplates, guns, swords, jack-boots, etc., etc., and a pillion saddle, which last I do not remember to have seen elsewhere. One of the bedrooms looks the picture of a haunted chamber, and, indeed, report says there is a ghost who occasionally makes himself audible, though not visible—perhaps the shade of some luckless inmate of a long-forgotten hiding-place within the thickness of the massive walls.

As I notice upon looking back I have kept almost exclusively to the Home Counties, I hope upon a future occasion to go farther afield. For the present I bid the reader adieu.

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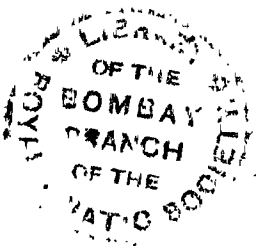

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